

THE

INTERMEDIATE STATE



*GEORGE S. BARRETT D. D.*

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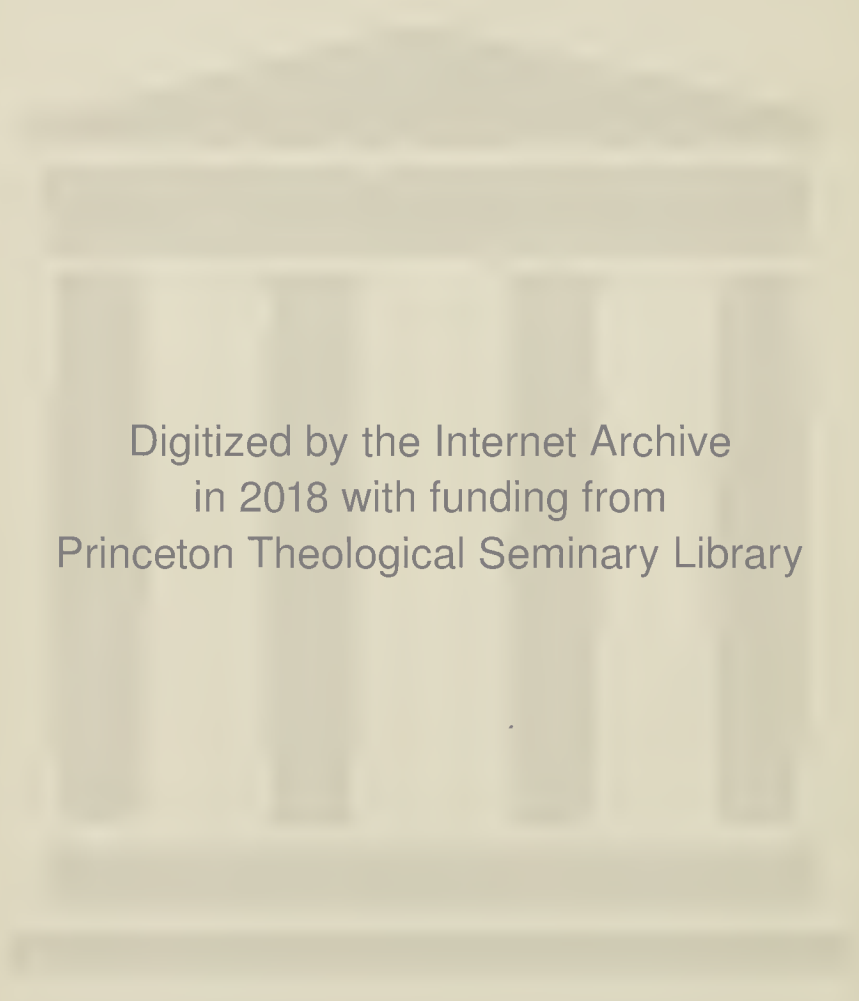
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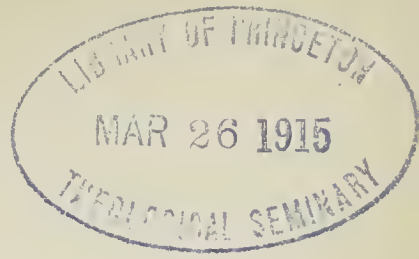




THE INTERMEDIATE STATE,  
AND  
THE LAST THINGS.



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THE  
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AND

*THE LAST THINGS.*

✓ BY

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'RELIGION IN DAILY LIFE,' 'THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST, ETC



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## P R E F A C E.

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**T**HE doctrine of the Intermediate State, with which these chapters are mainly concerned, has its own place in the Evangelical Creed, and I have endeavoured to ascertain by the examination of the teaching of Holy Scripture and by the witness of the Church, as embodied in the great historic creeds of Christendom, what this place may be.

I cannot expect that the conclusions which I have reached will command the assent of all those who may read this book; but even though they may differ from me in the interpretation they give to the words of Scripture, we shall, I trust, be one in the deference we pay to its supreme authority, and in the conviction that only as the same Divine Spirit who inspired its writers interprets its teach-

ing to us shall we be led into the fulness of 'the truth as it is in Jesus.'

In the concluding chapters I have ventured to discuss some of the solemn problems involved in the future punishment of sin, in the belief that any reverent and careful discussion of the great problem of evil and its punishment will ultimately be found to have contributed something, however small, to the settlement of the grave and perplexing questions which arise when the end of evil is considered.

With these brief explanatory words, I offer this little book to Him whom I desire to serve, and to the kindly consideration of my readers.

GEORGE S. BARRETT.

NORWICH,  
*February, 1896.*

## CONTENTS.

### THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTORY - - - -	I
II. THE EVIDENCE OF SCRIPTURE - -	12
III. THE EVIDENCE OF SCRIPTURE— <i>continued</i> -	25
IV. THE EVIDENCE OF REASON - - -	36
V. THE WITNESS OF THE CHURCH TO THE INTERMEDIATE STATE - - -	50
VI. ITS RELATION TO THE DEAD - - -	66
VII. ITS RELATION TO THOSE TO WHOM CHRIST HAS NOT BEEN MADE KNOWN IN THIS LIFE	80
VIII. PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD - - -	98
IX. ITS APPROACHING CLOSE : THE MILLENNIUM AND THE GREAT APOSTASY - - -	120
X. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST - - -	135
XI. THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY - - -	152
XII. THE SPIRITUAL BODY - - - -	168

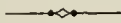
### THE LAST THINGS.

I. THE DOOM OF THE LOST - - -	187
II. HEAVEN—THE GLORY OF THE SOUL - -	244
III. THE GLORY OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE -	260





# *THE INTERMEDIATE STATE*



## I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

THERE are few, I imagine, who at some period or other of their lives have not pondered the grave and solemn questions connected with death and the state after death; fewer still, even of those who have rejected the Christian revelation, who have not wished that the immortal life beyond the grave might prove true. In the preface to Dr. Martineau's 'Types of Ethical Theory,' a striking and pathetic illustration is given of the clinging, even of the most resolute unbelief, to the hope of a life after death. Dr. Martineau, describing the interest Mr. John Stuart Mill—'the saint of rationalism,' as I believe Mr. Gladstone once called him—took in his speculative work on the great problems of metaphysical and logical

science, says of Mr. Mill that ‘ he exhorted me against long delay of their publication; on these “great subjects,” he said, “ I do not want to have to wait for your lectures, which, like Brown’s, will no doubt be published some day; but before that time *I may very likely be studying them* (these great subjects) *in another state of existence* ’ ’ (May 21, 1841).\* And yet of the reality of this other ‘state of existence’ of which Mr. Mill thus spoke to his friend, he himself tells us there ‘ is no assurance whatever, on grounds of natural religion,’† and natural religion was the only religion which Mr. Mill believed possible to man.

And if thinkers like Mr. Mill—and other names might be mentioned in addition to his own—find the heart persistently cherishing the hope of an eternal life beyond the grave, a hope indulged against all the reasoned convictions of the intellect, the average men and women of the world, to whom critical speculation is almost unknown, cling no less passionately to the belief that death does not end all, but that behind the thick curtain of death there is concealed a life that shall reunite all the links broken by death, and satisfy the fullest aspira-

\* ‘ Types of Ethical Theory,’ vol. i., Preface, p. xii.

† ‘ Three Essays on Religion,’ p. 210.

tions and needs of the soul. It is true that the problem connected with this invisible life of eternity may be forgotten or ignored so long as the present life is allowed to absorb the energies and the attention ; but the moment death itself draws near, and the shadows of the eternal world fall across our path, we are compelled, in spite of ourselves, to face the momentous issues which are involved in the passage from time into eternity, and questions then are asked which touch the very depths of our being.

The present series of papers is an attempt humbly and reverently to investigate some of the grave and serious questions which thus arise in the presence of death, and more especially those which are connected with what is known as 'The Intermediate State,' that dimly-lighted and mysterious region which intervenes between death and the Last Judgment, and in which the souls of the departed dwell before they are reunited to the body. My endeavour will be to show that scattered up and down the Scriptures are many hints and many words which suggest to us the existence of such a state, and that reason lends considerable support to the teaching of Scripture on this point. We shall also see how far a

belief in an Intermediate State has been the faith of the Church from the first ages until now; what expression it has found in the great creeds of Christendom; and then we shall pass to the more serious and momentous moral issues involved in the existence of the Intermediate State, and we shall consider these in relation to three classes, which may be said to exhaust the entire human race: First, those who have believed in Christ in this life; secondly, those who have rejected Christ in this life; and lastly, that immense multitude of our fellow-men to whom Christ was never made known during the present life. Other questions, of hardly less serious importance, will come up for discussion, such as the legitimacy of Prayers for the Dead, and the Roman Doctrine of Purgatory; but the chief interest of the remaining part of our discussion will be with the great eschatological problems involved in the close of the Intermediate State, and the consummation of all things at the Second Coming of Christ, and in these we shall be brought face to face with some of the difficulties involved in the Scriptural doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body; and last of all, I shall attempt to discuss, with the reserve and humility becoming anyone who deals with

the awful issues of the Final Judgment, what appears to me to be the Scriptural doctrine both concerning the saved and the lost.

On the temper and spirit in which such an investigation as that on which we have entered ought to be conducted, there can be no difference of opinion among those who reverence the supreme authority of the revelation God has given to the world in His Son, and who remember that for their belief, not less than for their actions, they will have to give an account at the Judgment-seat of Christ. At the same time it ought not to be forgotten that if it be possible to dishonour the teaching of Holy Scripture by reading into it our own crude fancies and speculations, and to do violence to the sovereignty of truth by attempting to force the facts of revelation into the narrow mould of some preconceived creed, it is equally possible, on the other hand, to lose part of the precious substance of the Christian revelation by confining our attention only to the better known and more indisputable truths of God's Word. We are all apt to forget, as Bishop Butler says in the 'Analogy,'\* that if 'practical Christianity, or that faith and behaviour which render a man a Christian, is a plain and obvious thing,'

\* 'Analogy,' part ii., cap. 3.

it is also true that 'the more distinct and particular knowledge of those things, the study of which the Apostle calls "going on unto perfection," and of the prophetic parts of revelation, like many parts of natural and even civil knowledge, may require very exact thought and careful consideration.' And to the indolent plea that these obscurer portions of Scripture are not worthy of our serious attention, Butler replies: 'The whole scheme of Scripture is not yet understood; so if it ever comes to be understood, before the restitution of all things, and without miraculous interposition, it must be in the same way natural knowledge is come at; by the continuance and progress of learning and of liberty, and by particular persons attending to, comparing, and pursuing, intimations scattered up and down it, which are overlooked and disregarded by the generality of the world. . . . Nor is it at all incredible that a Book which has been so long in the possession of mankind should contain many truths as yet undiscovered.'

I do not quote these words with any intention of suggesting or implying that the doctrine of the Intermediate State is one of these 'undiscovered' truths of Scripture, 'overlooked and disregarded' until very recently, for we



shall see that the belief in such an Intermediate State was widely spread in the Christian Church up to the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century; but we may learn from Butler's words warrant and encouragement for us to devote some time to the study of even the more obscure parts of Scripture, in the assurance that 'every Scripture inspired of God is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.'\*

A few words by way of historic introduction will prepare the way for the subject with which our next paper will deal—viz., 'The evidence of Scripture for an Intermediate State.' The doctrine of an Intermediate State—that is, of a state intervening between death and the final judgment, in which the spirit separated from the body is fully conscious, and within certain limits is susceptible of moral change, either for the better or for the worse—was, as has been said, widely believed in the Church of Christ for nearly sixteen centuries. The evidence for this will be adduced in a later chapter.† It is

\* 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

† 'The Belief of the Church in the Intermediate State as declared in the Creeds of Christendom.'

sufficient for my present purpose to say that with few exceptions the Church Fathers and the Creeds agree in teaching that it is not until the Judgment Day man reaches his final award, and that in the period between death and the judgment, the souls of the righteous and of the unrighteous are in 'Hades'—a common designation, as we shall see, for that 'Paradise' into which the blest enter at death, and for that darker and sadder state which is the lot of all who have wilfully rejected the offer of mercy in Christ in this life.

This belief, however, was gradually abandoned by many of the Reformers, mainly on account of the corruption which had become associated with it in the Roman doctrine of purgatory, and, from the Reformation onward, the belief has until lately almost disappeared from the creed of Evangelical Protestant Christendom. The popular belief as to the future state is expressed in the familiar language of 'dying and going to heaven,'\* or 'going to hell'; and the Westminster Confession explicitly teaches that

\* Dr. Donaldson ('The Apologist,' p. 72), quoted by Archdeacon Farrar in his 'Lives of the Fathers,' vol. i., p. 145, points out that the first occurrence of the phrase 'Going to Heaven' is in 'The Martyrdom of Justin Martyr,' and he adds: 'It is remarkable that it is a heathen, and probably a Stoic, who uses the words.'



‘ the bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption ; but their souls (which neither die nor sleep), having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies ; and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Besides these two places for souls departed from their bodies the Scripture acknowledgeth none.’\*

A few isolated thinkers, both in the earlier and later periods of the history of the Church, have held the doctrine that between death and the judgment the soul was wholly unconscious, only awaking to consciousness with the resurrection of the body ; but the support Scripture affords to this sleep of the soul after death is so small, and the philosophical difficulties it provokes so serious, that it has never become more than a speculative fancy of a few, and I shall not deem it necessary to spend any time in its discussion.

Of late years, however, and very largely in

\* Chap. xxxii.

consequence of the attention and interest which have been aroused by the discussions which have taken place on the future state of the wicked, both in our periodical literature and in graver theological treatises, a reaction has to some extent silently taken place in favour of the older belief of the Church in the Intermediate State. A doctrine that, within the memory of many who are now living, would once have been associated with Romanism, and denounced as part of the corruption of truth of which Rome has been guilty, has been advocated by Protestant theologians as eminent and as devout as Dorner and Müller (to mention only the names of the most distinguished), in Germany; as Pressensé and Pétavel, in France and Switzerland; as Archdeacon Farrar and Dean Plumptre, in England; and by a large number of learned theologians in the Protestant Churches of America. It is one of the easiest as it is one of the worst vices of controversy to attempt to defeat an opposing truth by branding it with an ignominious and ill-omened name; and it is perhaps one of the more hopeful signs of the growth, not merely of tolerance in the present day, but of that large-hearted desire for truth which follows Truth whithersoever she may lead, that it is no longer possible

to demolish the doctrine of the Intermediate State by affixing to it the nickname of purgatory. That the Roman doctrine of purgatory is a corruption of the truth of God, and that it has wrought immeasurable mischief to the spiritual life, even in the Roman Communion, no one believes more heartily than myself; but even this doctrine of purgatory would never have gained the place it has held for centuries in the belief of Western Christendom had it not been rather the corruption of the truth than the fabrication of a lie. The Reformers were face to face with the monstrous evils wrought by the doctrine of purgatory on the heart and conscience of Europe, and they resolved on plucking up the whole thing by the roots; but it is possible that, in their zeal for the destruction of the tares, they may unwittingly have pulled up some good seed with them. At any rate, it will be wise for us to endeavour to see what may be the truth concealed beneath the Romish doctrine, and of which it is the distortion and corruption; and, if we find any truth that has not yet found its place in our Evangelical Protestant theology, to endeavour to restore it to its rightful place in our creed.

## II.

### THE EVIDENCE OF SCRIPTURE.

IN endeavouring to form a just estimate of the teaching of Holy Scripture on the Intermediate State, there is one introductory remark which we shall do well to bear in mind. We ought not to be surprised if we do not find any explicit teaching on this mysterious subject in the Bible. It is not the way of Scripture to satisfy all our curiosity, even when it is legitimate curiosity, concerning the future state. The Bible is the record of the revelation which God has made of Himself to man, and of His redeeming love and mercy; and it spends all its strength in setting before us the privileges and responsibilities of this life, the glory and peace of life in Christ, and the guilt and misery of rejecting the salvation Christ offers to the soul. On everything that pertains to 'life and godliness' the Bible is explicit and

unmistakable in its teaching, but on the secrets of the unseen world it preserves a solemn and most significant reserve.

At the same time Scripture does not leave us without some light, even if the light be dim, on the mysteries beyond death. It suggests, it hints, it draws aside the veil that hides the future from us, it allows us one quick glance within the veil, and then it lets the veil fall again; and it is only due to Scripture, and especially to the reverence we owe to the authority of our Lord and of His Apostles, if we endeavour to gather up and to articulate these scattered hints, and to see what they teach us concerning the state of the dead. It is this task which I propose to attempt in the next two papers of this series.

The teaching of the Old Testament need not detain us very long, for the revelation of which it is the record was necessarily fragmentary and imperfect as compared with that found in the New Testament. The whole subject of the belief of the Jews concerning immortality is far too large to be discussed here, and it may be dismissed with the remark that although it is too much to say that there is no indication of any hope of a life after death in the earlier books of the Old Testament, yet the hope was

wavering and uncertain. The familiar word for the 'grave,' into which the righteous and unrighteous descend at death, is 'Sheôl,' a word unhappily misrendered to our ears in many passages in the Authorized Version by 'Hell.'

'Sheôl' occurs sixty-five times in the Old Testament, and whilst in the great majority of instances it is rendered in the Septuagint by 'Hades,' in the Authorized Version it is translated thirty-one times by 'grave,' thirty-one times by 'hell,' and three times by 'pit.' On these diverse renderings of the one Hebrew word 'Sheôl' the Revisers of the Old Testament remark in their Preface (p. viii.): 'The Hebrew Sheôl, which signifies the abode of departed spirits, and corresponds to the Greek Hades, or the under-world, is variously rendered in the Authorized Version by "grave," "pit," and "hell." Of these renderings, "hell," if it could be taken in its original sense as used in the Creeds,\* would be a fairly adequate equivalent for the Hebrew word; but it is so commonly understood of the place of torment, that to employ it frequently would lead to inevitable misunderstanding. The Revisers, therefore, in the historical narratives, have left the rendering

\* *E.g.*, 'He descended into Hell.'



“the grave,” or “the pit,” in the text, with a marginal note “Heb., Sheôl,” to indicate that it does not indicate the place of burial; while in the poetical writings they have most commonly put “Sheôl” in the text, and “the grave” in the margin.’ In one passage (Isa. xiv. 9) the Revisers have retained the rendering ‘hell’ in the text, and have indicated by a note in the margin that it stands for ‘Sheôl’ in the Hebrew.

The teaching of the Old Testament as to the nature of ‘Sheôl’ may be summarized thus: It is the place into which are gathered the spirits of all who depart this present life: it is that dim and shadowy under-world which the soul enters at death. Sheôl is therefore a common designation for the abode of the good and of the evil after death, just as we shall see ‘Hades’ is in the New Testament. Thus we read in Psalm ix. 17: ‘The wicked shall return to Sheôl, even all the nations that forget God;’ and in Psalm xvi. 10 the Psalmist, rejoicing in God, says: ‘Thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheôl,’ a verse the Apostle Peter expressly applies to our Lord, of Whom he says that David spake ‘of the resurrection of Christ, that neither was He left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption’ (Acts ii. 31).

It is perfectly true that in some of the later Psalms and Prophets the hope of immortality burns more brightly than it does in the earlier books of the Old Testament, but it is still true, as Dorner says, 'that in the Old Testament the terrors of Sheôl are not vanquished by faith.'

It is when we come to the New Testament that we find fuller teaching on this shadowy state into which the soul enters at death, and although, as I have said, the teaching is purposely left incomplete, yet there is enough, as we shall see, to warrant us in saying that according to the New Testament the souls of the righteous and of the unrighteous do not enter what is commonly understood as heaven and hell at death, but pass into a state that is preparatory to their final condition, a state that for the righteous is one of unmixed and ever enlarging peace and joy, for they are 'with Christ, which is very far better' (Phil. i. 23), whilst for the wicked it is one of awful punishment and anguish (Luke xvi. 23), and to this double Intermediate State the common name of 'Hades' is given.

1. In the parable to which reference has just been made, of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke xvi.), the rich man is said to be in



‘Hades’ and ‘in torment,’ whilst in the sermon of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost our Lord is expressly said to have entered ‘Hades’ after His death on the cross. Now, as no one can suppose the soul of the wicked rich man and the soul of the Lord Jesus Christ were literally in the same place after death, it is certain ‘Hades’ in the New Testament, like ‘Sheôl’ in the Old, can only be a common name for the place or state of all departed spirits after death. The point, however, I desire here to emphasize is this, that neither did our Lord pass immediately into heaven at His death: this was reserved for Him at His ascension, after His body had been raised from the grave (Acts ii. 32-34); nor did the rich man pass at once into the final place of torment for the lost, but both were in a world of disembodied spirits awaiting their resurrection, the one in inconceivable misery, the other in equally inconceivable blessedness.

2. In Revelation vi. 9, 10, we read: ‘I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the

earth? And there was given to them each one a white robe, and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little while, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, which should be killed, even as they were, should be fulfilled.'

I do not wish to press the mysterious language of the Book of Revelation so as to make it fit into any preconceived theory of the future, but certainly these words seem to hint that the martyrs have not yet entered heaven, but rest 'beneath the altar' in a disembodied state, their 'souls' awaiting and longing for their complete satisfaction in God.

3. Other names given to this shadowy world of spirits are 'the lower parts of the earth,' into which Christ is said to have 'descended' after death (Ephes. iv. 9), and 'Paradise,' into which our Lord promised the penitent thief he should 'to-day' enter (Luke xxiii. 43).

It has always appeared to me very significant that in this gracious promise to the dying thief Christ did not say, 'This day thou shalt be with Me in heaven,' but used a word only found three times in the New Testament, and that is derived from the Persian, literally meaning 'a park,' or an 'extended garden,' to designate the place where the forgiven thief

should meet his forgiving Lord. Certainly 'Paradise' could hardly be a permanent resting-place for a departed soul. A park or a garden is not a place where we always dwell; it is rather a place of temporary resort, and of refreshment and rest.

4. That this unseen and blessed world of souls into which the dying thief and his Lord passed at death, which Lazarus entered, and in which the martyrs are resting, is not what is usually understood by 'heaven,' seems explicitly declared by the words of St. Peter concerning David, whose soul was in Hades: 'David ascended not into the heavens' (Acts ii. 34)—this crowning glory having, as yet, been granted only to one man, the Man Christ Jesus.

5. At the same time this state of the blessed dead, although it is far from being the fulness of blessedness and glory which will be theirs when they receive their resurrection bodies and behold the beatific vision of God in heaven, is one of complete and unspeakable happiness. It is enough here to quote again St. Paul's own longing for death: 'I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is very far better.'

So far we have only examined the more

general passages which bear on this subject ; we come now to a more critical and important series of texts which speak of the moral significance of this Intermediate State.

6. And of these the first I adduce is the great passage in 1 Peter iii. 18-20, which I will quote from the Revised Version : ' Christ also suffered for sin once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God ; being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit, in which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which aforetime were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited for Noah, while the ark was a-preparing.' Now, these words expressly assure us that when Christ Jesus died on the Cross He did not perish, but He was ' quickened in the spirit,' and in the spirit He preached unto certain mysterious beings who are called ' the spirits in prison.' There was only one period in the history of our Lord to which these words could apply, the period between His death and His resurrection. It has accordingly been the all but universal belief of the Church that, during the three days that Christ's body lay in the grave, His spirit descended into the world of spirits, as the familiar words of the creed declare, ' He de-

scended into hell,' that is, 'Hades.' Yes; but for what purpose did our Lord thus visit this abode of the spirits? What a light it casts on the supreme end of the Incarnation, what a new revelation it affords us of the tender and yearning pity of the Good Shepherd for the lost sheep still in the wilderness, when we are told that even in the interval between His death and His resurrection our Lord was still occupied in His redeeming work of seeking and saving the lost! He went 'in the Spirit,' and 'preached unto the spirits in prison.'

True, there is only one specific class of the dead to whom we are told He preached, those 'who aforetime were disobedient . . . in the days of Noah'; but how immeasurable is the significance of this single fact! These men whose 'wickedness' is described in the Book of Genesis (Gen. vi. 5) as having been 'great in the earth,' 'every imagination of whose thought was only evil continually,' whose 'way was corrupt,' who had 'filled the earth with violence,' who had despised 'the long-suffering of God,' and who had perished by the just judgment of God in their sins, are visited in their dark prison-house by the Son of God: they see the face of Jesus Christ, they hear the voice of the Saviour of the world, they listen to

the Gospel preached by His own Divine lips ! Is it possible to read this single fact, so casually alluded to by St. Peter, and not to feel its immense meaning ? When antediluvian sinners who had never heard of Christ did hear of Him, and received the offer of His mercy in their prison-house, then I am filled with a new hope concerning all who, like them, live and die without the knowledge of the Christ who came to be the ' Saviour of the world.'

The point of the text, however, on which I now lay special stress is the proof, the positive proof, it affords, that there are some for whom ' hell ' does not commence at death, some who lived and who died in disobedience to God, but to whom, after death, the Gospel they never heard in this life was mercifully made known.

7. And this is what St. Peter expressly teaches us in another passage in this same Epistle. In 1 Peter iv. 6 we read, ' Unto this end was the Gospel preached, even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.'

These words are too explicit to admit of any doubt. That they refer to the statement we have already quoted from the third chapter is now generally admitted by expositors, but it is



remarkable that they enlarge that statement even whilst they refer to it. They tell us 'the Gospel' was 'preached even to the dead,' that is, not to the spiritually dead—for, as Canon Cook says in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' 'We may assume as certain the words refer to physical, not, as some have held, to spiritual death'—but to 'dead men';\* and they also give to us the reason for this preaching of the Gospel to these 'dead men.' This was first 'that they might be judged according to men in the flesh,' that is, as I understand the words—and they are not without difficulty—that these dead men who had lived and had died in sin, but who had never heard of the mercy of God in Christ, and who therefore could never have been capable either of the guilt of rejecting it or of the blessedness of its acceptance, might be put, so far as judgment was concerned, into the same moral position as living men who hear of Christ are placed, 'that they might be judged according to men in the flesh.' At the same time—and how completely this is in accordance with all that Scripture teaches us of the purpose of God in the Incarnation and sacrifice of the Son of God!—this preaching of

\* That 'the dead' mean 'men who had died' is now admitted by all the best expositors.

the Gospel was not intended to lead to the still deeper condemnation and punishment of these 'dead men'; it has a more gracious purpose than this: it was to save them from the doom of their sins, it was 'preached' to them 'that they might live according to God in the spirit.'

8. One more passage that seems to bear on this mysterious preaching of Christ to the dead shall be adduced, and with it I will close this chapter. In John v. 25 we read, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, The time cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.' I am aware that these words have been held by some expositors to refer to the spiritual results of preaching Christ, 'the dead' being supposed to mean the spiritually dead; but this interpretation, although a possible one, certainly does not seem to harmonize with the undeniable reference to the physically dead which follows the text. The words have always borne for me a more tender and gracious meaning since I learnt to regard them as Christ's own reference to that gracious work of preaching the Gospel to 'dead men' of which we have seen St. Peter speaks, and on which our Lord was shortly to enter.



### III.

#### THE EVIDENCE OF SCRIPTURE—*continued.*

IN our last chapter we endeavoured to review a part of the evidence that may be found in the teaching of Holy Scripture for the existence of an Intermediate State intervening between death and the Final Judgment.

In addition to the scattered hints which may be gathered from the Old Testament, and from isolated passages in the New, we found there were two great passages in the first Epistle of St. Peter\* which expressly declare that our Lord, during the interval between His death and His resurrection, was occupied in preaching the Gospel 'to the dead,' and as these dead could only exist in a disembodied state—the resurrection of the body being still in the future—they are called 'spirits'; 'spirits in prison,' for it appears that, on account of their 'dis-

\* 1 Pet. iii. 18-20; iv. 6.

obedience' to the warnings of God in the days of Noah, they had been punished by being shut up in 'prison.' These passages, moreover, in addition to the light they cast on the moral condition of the dead who have never heard of Christ in this life, and to the hope we shall see later on they permit us to cherish that to all such the Gospel will be made known, as it has been made known to us, certainly warrant us in saying that there are some, at any rate, for whom the final states of heaven or hell do not commence at death, but who are in a state where moral and spiritual change, and that of the most decisive and momentous nature, is still possible.

I propose in this chapter to continue and to conclude our discussion of the teaching of Scripture on this mysterious and yet interesting subject.

1. And in the first place I adduce a group of passages of a kindred nature, the full meaning of which, it is hardly too much to say, has not yet entered into the thought and teaching of the Church of Christ.

In Eph. i. 9, 10 we read (I quote from the Revised Version): 'Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in

Him unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth.'

In Col. i. 19, 20 we read: 'It was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell; and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things upon the earth or things in the heavens.'

So, too, in Phil. xxix. 10, 11 we read: 'Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the Name that is above every name, that in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'

Now, I put these three passages together for a purpose. In each of them we find explicit mention of the work of Christ as extending beyond this world into the unseen world of spirits. It is the will of God to 'sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens' as well as 'the things upon the earth,' to 'reconcile all things unto Himself' through 'the blood of His cross'—'whether things upon the earth or

things in the heavens,' and, 'in the Name of Jesus every knee' shall 'bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth.' It may be said there is no mention in any of these passages of any Intermediate State, and that the references to the 'things in the heavens' are too mysterious to allow us to build anything on them; but, at any rate, the references mean something, and the least they can mean is that the gracious and redeeming work of our Lord is not confined to those who are on the earth, but reaches even to the invisible world that lies in the heavens. Nor is it true that there is no reference in any of the passages just quoted to the Intermediate State. In the last of the three passages there is an expression rendered in the Revised Version and in the Authorized Version 'of things under the earth,' with the marginal rendering in the Revised Version, '*or, things of the world below,*' of which no less an authority than Meyer—one of the most careful and scholarly of all the commentators on the New Testament—confidently affirms the meaning to be 'the dead in Hades'; and then he adds, 'The adoration on the part of the latter presupposes the *descensus Christi ad inferos* (the descent of Christ into the lower parts of the earth), in which He presented

Himself to the spirits in Hades as the Lord' ('Comm. on Phil,' *in loc.*).

2. In addition to these passages of Scripture there are some texts which, to say the least, seem to have an important bearing on the moral condition of the dead in Hades as implying the possibility of moral and spiritual progress taking place after death and up to the Final Judgment.

Thus, for example, in Phil. i. 6 the Apostle says: 'Being confident of this very thing, that He which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.' It is enough here to quote the commentary of Calvin on this passage: 'Although those who, freed from this mortal body, no longer fight with the lusts of the flesh, are, so to speak, beyond the reach of harm, yet there is nothing unreasonable in saying they are in a state of progress, because they have not yet attained to that to which they aspire, they have not yet gained the blessedness and the glory for which they hope, and the day has not yet dawned which shall reveal the treasures hidden in their hope. Moreover, when their hope is inquired of, their eyes must be fixed always on the blessedness of the Resurrection, as on its final end.'

So, too, in 1 Cor. i. 7, 8 there appears to be a similar hint of spiritual progress taking place beyond and after this life: 'Waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye be un-reprovable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.' I am aware that it may be said that as the Apostle expected the Second Advent—the Parousia—of our Lord to take place in his own day, these words only mean that he believed that Christ would preserve from falling His own people up 'to the end'—that is, up to His own coming again; but if they mean as much as this, they must certainly mean still more, for, since Christ has not yet come, and St. Paul's words are still true, they must certainly imply that all who are Christ's are still being 'confirmed'—that is, 'made firm'—'to the end'; and it is difficult to see how this is possible in the case of either living or dead, unless spiritual progress in grace is assumed to be theirs.

Nor is it the righteous alone who are waiting for the Second Advent of Christ and the Day of Judgment as the completion and crisis of their present state. There are three passages in the New Testament which refer to the doom of the wicked, in each of which it is expressly stated that their present condition is pre-



paratory for, and in expectation of, the great day of account.

In 2 Pet. ii. 9 we read : ' The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the Day of Judgment ;' and in Jude 6 we are told that ' the angels which kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.' The same truth concerning the fallen angels is taught in 2 Pet. ii. 4 : ' For if God spared not the angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness to be reserved unto judgment.'

In these three passages it appears that neither in the case of the ' unrighteous ' nor of the ' angels when they sinned ' is the final state of punishment reached now, but they are ' kept under punishment,' ' kept in everlasting bonds,' ' reserved unto judgment,' a judgment we are expressly told will take place at ' the great day.'

Looking in the same direction, and pointing to the possibility of spiritual change for the better or the worse, even up to the Day of Judgment, are the familiar words of our Lord recorded in Matt. xiii. 30 : ' Let both grow together until the harvest ; and in the time of

the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them ; but gather the wheat into My barn.' Here again we find the same truth which has appeared in the group of passages we have been considering, that growth is possible up to the 'harvest,' and that both the tares and the wheat share in this growth after their kind ; that is, neither the wicked nor the righteous reach complete development of character at death, but continue to grow until the final award of the Judgment Day is made.

3. There is one further argument in favour of the Intermediate State, only inferentially derived from Scripture, it is true, but which is of so speculative and uncertain a character that I have been in some doubt whether to adduce it or not. Perhaps, on the whole, it will be better simply to state it, leaving each reader either to reject it altogether, or to give to it such weight as may seem good to him. The argument to which I now refer is derived from our Lord's three raisings from the dead. It has always seemed to me that if the souls of the righteous entered heaven immediately after death—that is, if they reached full and perfected blessedness the moment they left this life, if they were permitted to see the unclouded glory



of God, and to behold the beatific vision—if, in a word, all that the New Testament means when it speaks of ‘the glory’ to be revealed is already theirs, then for our Lord to have recalled any soul from that high state of perfect and overflowing blessedness to this sorrowful and sinful world was, at least, not like the infinite tenderness and mercy of the Lord. I do not for one moment doubt that even if Christ had seen fit to do this He would have done well, for ‘all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to them that keep His covenant and His testimonies’; but it would have been harder for us to have seen the mercy and the goodness in this mysterious act. On the other hand, if the righteous are not fully ‘perfected’ at death—that is, if they have not reached the consummate and overflowing blessedness which will be theirs when they receive their resurrection bodies, and have been formally acquitted by their Judge, and are received into the glory of God—if they occupy for the present a state of lower bliss, perfectly happy because they are ‘with Christ, which is very far better,’ and yet conscious there is greater blessedness and greater glory yet to come, then the difficulty occasioned by the exceptional recall of any from this Inter-

mediate State of peace and blessedness to the present world, if not wholly removed, certainly seems to be considerably lessened.

I gather up in a few words the sum of the evidence Scripture has afforded as to the Intermediate State :

1. According to the uniform teaching of the New Testament, the final stage and the most solemn moment in the history of each soul is reached at the Day of Judgment, when Christ comes the second time and the resurrection of the body takes place. This final stage is called by various names in the New Testament ; it is sufficient for us to denominate it by its usual appellation, ' heaven ' or ' hell.'

2. Since neither the righteous nor the wicked have as yet entered this final stage, they exist in a disembodied state in a state which is ' intermediate ' as lying between this life and the Day of Judgment, and which is preparatory for that day of account.

3. This Intermediate State was called in the Old Testament ' Sheôl,' and is generally termed ' Hades ' in the New Testament, although it also bears other names, such as ' the lower parts of the earth,' ' things under the earth,' ' Paradise.'

4. This Intermediate State is really a double

state, for since 'Hades' contained both the soul of the rich man who was 'in torment,' and also the soul of the Lord Jesus Christ before His resurrection, it is certain that it is a common name for the disembodied state generally.

5. For the righteous this Intermediate State is one of inconceivable blessedness and peace; for the wicked, one of equally inconceivable punishment and suffering.

6. In this Intermediate State both the righteous and the wicked 'grow'—the one in further and darker developments of evil; the other in ever richer and fuller progress in goodness and grace.

7. For some who have lived and died without the knowledge of Christ, even though they lived when on earth in disobedience and sin, the Intermediate State has brought the proclamation of the Gospel. The offer of mercy has been made to them as it is made to us, 'that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.'

In the following chapter we shall consider what support reason lends to this doctrine of an Intermediate State.

## IV.

### THE EVIDENCE OF REASON.

THE final and decisive evidence for any belief that we may hold concerning the state of the dead must in every case be the testimony of Holy Scripture, but it is also true that reason may aid the reception of a Scripture doctrine by removing any difficulties of belief associated with the doctrine, or by showing the antecedent possibility, and even the probability, of the truth in question.

In the present chapter I wish to examine part of the evidence that reason affords for the existence of an Intermediate State, and from what has just been said, the real value of the intimations of the reason on so mysterious a subject will be at once perceived. If there were no support in Scripture for the doctrine, if the teaching of our Lord and of His Apostles decisively negatived its truth, it would be worse

than useless for us to discuss what reason might have to say on the matter ; but if, as we have already proved, there is sufficient ground in Scripture to warrant a belief in the Intermediate State, then the corroborative testimony of the reason may prove a valuable aid to faith.

1. In the first place, the Intermediate State seems to be required by the moral condition of those who, having rejected the offer of mercy throughout life, were, nevertheless, saved at the eleventh hour. That there are such cases, even if there are not many, no one who has had any dealing with souls can doubt.

Take the case, for example, of a man who, up to the closing week of his life, has lived in the unrestricted indulgence of passion and selfish gratification. He is suddenly stricken down by mortal disease, and then—as mercifully is sometimes the case—during the last few days of his life on earth the work of grace in the soul has begun. Torn from the world he has loved, and in the silence and solemnity of his sick-room, the memory of the past comes back to him, his wasted and sinful life rises up to condemn him, or perhaps a mother's prayers whisper their words of blessing over him once more, his conscience and heart suddenly awaken from their long sleep of death, and

with an exceeding great and bitter cry he casts himself at the foot of the Cross with the prayer broken on his lips, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' He is saved, although at the last hour of life, saved by the infinite merit of the sacrifice of Christ, and by the infinite love of God; he is 'accepted in the Beloved,' although he has only the dregs of a life to offer to God; and he dies at peace with God, pardoned and justified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

True, but can we imagine that such a soul has been at once made fit for the beatific vision of God by the spiritual crisis through which it has suddenly passed? It may be forgiven, it may be justified, but in what possible sense can we say it has been sanctified? The roots of a true holiness were planted in the heart at the moment of the second birth, but it was impossible for them to have borne any of the fruits or flowers of the Christian life. What moral preparation could those short hours of a death-bed repentance have afforded for an eternity to be spent in the light and love of God? The man has doubtless been 'born again,' but has he had time to know what living 'again' really means? Is it unreasonable to say that some further purifying, some fuller training and disciplining of the still



immature life of the babe in Christ, may be necessary before it reaches the larger and nobler life of 'a man in Christ Jesus'? Forgiveness is not holiness, although it is the only way to holiness on earth, and in this case what possibility has there been of the soul gaining that 'holiness without which no man shall see the Lord'? If the analogies of earth are any guide to us, and if the present conditions of moral life and growth are not annihilated by death, but extend into the life beyond the grave, then it seems clear that such a soul must require some period of moral and spiritual preparation for the unimagined glory of heaven which is to be revealed at the second advent of Christ. Not many years ago, one who had filled the highest judicial position in this country, and who had been brought to Christ when more than seventy years old, was to be seen in the lobbies of the House of Lords 'buttonholing' one after another who entered the House, and the constant refrain of his conversation were the pathetic words: 'My soul is saved, but my life has been lost!'

Is it wrong to suppose that in the presence of the Saviour in the other world, and under His gracious teaching, such a soul may complete the lessons which were only begun on

earth, and may grow into the perfect likeness of Him whom it has already begun to love and to serve?

Nor does this supposition require us to believe that such a soul takes with it into the eternal world any actual sin. It may be difficult to understand the moral revolution involved in complete severance from evil, and it may be still more difficult to see how death can affect such a revolution, but the testimony of Scripture seems decisive on the point. At the same time, a negative freedom from sin may require to be supplemented and completed by a large and rich growth in goodness, a growth which, from the circumstances of the case, was impossible in this life, but which may be reached in the rest and blessedness of the Intermediate State, and under the immediate teaching of Christ Himself.

2. Again, such a state seems equally required by the limitations and imperfections of the spiritual life of the best Christian. The paradox of the Christian life is always true, that the purer and saintlier the life the more is it conscious of shortcoming and sin. As the light of God shines with increasing brightness within, it discovers weaknesses, failures, imperfections, sins, of which we were unconscious



when the light was less, and the spiritual vision less keen. It was St. Paul, standing on the verge of eternity, and with the manifold wealth of that noble and heroic life all gathered up at his feet, who said: 'This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.'\* Now, if to the last moments of this mortal life the consciousness of imperfection and of sin clings even to the holiest Christian, it does certainly seem at least probable that a further training in holiness must be necessary ere the soul shall pass into the unclouded glory of heaven. I am aware that I am dealing with purely speculative possibilities, and that it may be said, as we know literally nothing of the conditions of life after death, no good result can come from discussing what may or may not be possible then; but it may be said in reply—and I think justly said—that if Scripture gives us any warrant for believing there is a state of moral and spiritual development intervening between death and the Judgment, then the actual needs of the spiritual life are of value in illuminating and supporting the brief hints afforded by Scripture. It is, at least, congruous with all

\* 2 Tim. i. 16.

we know of the conditions and growth of goodness to suppose that the believer who at death departs to 'be with Christ, which is very far better,' may enjoy such a fulness of communion with his Lord that he shall make progress in holiness in that higher life more rapidly than was possible on earth.

And Scripture itself, we have seen, seems to hint the possibility of such a progress when it assures us, 'He who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ,' and that 'the path of the just is a shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day.'

3. Once more, the same reasoning will apply to the wicked as well as to the righteous. Evil as well as goodness is often undeveloped and immature on earth, and requires the opportunity of corresponding development if it is to declare its real nature to God and to men. Some men die whose character in relation to Christ and to goodness is so undeveloped that it is difficult to know what their character really was. Apparently they are neither for Christ nor against Him; they seem neither hot nor cold, neither friends nor enemies of God. And yet we know that one or other of these they must be; that there are only two paths,

the narrow and the broad ; only two masters any man can serve, Christ or self ; only two characters standing out in lurid relief on the Judgment Day, 'the righteous' and 'the wicked' ; but to which of these two classes they belong is not as yet manifest, and for the reason that the evil in them has not been fully revealed. Malification—if I may coin a word—not less than sanctification, may be incomplete, and the Intermediate State may afford room for its completion. Just as there may be new and more rapid growth in goodness, so there may be new and surprising developments of evil in the eternal world, which shall reveal the real nature of the decision which the will had secretly made on earth, and shall prepare the wicked for the great assize as truly as the progress of the saved shall prepare them for their blessedness. The Intermediate State may gather up and stereotype on the character 'all the things done in the body,' and so slowly and solemnly usher in that awful retribution which will fall on the wicked when they have to give up their account to their Judge.

4. A still more serious and important argument remains to be stated. The Bible always speaks of the Final Judgment as the supreme crisis in the history of every human

soul, and it declares that this crisis will not take place until the Second Advent of Christ, when the righteous and the wicked alike will be summoned to appear before their final Judge. It is hardly necessary for me to quote many passages of Scripture in detailed support of so familiar a truth, but the following extracts may be taken as illustrating the uniform teaching of Holy Scripture on the supreme significance of the Judgment Day to each individual soul. Thus—to take the words of our Lord first—in the parable of the wheat and the tares,\* Christ says, ‘Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn,’ and then Christ adds, ‘The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels.’ As ‘therefore the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the world.’ So, too, at the close of the parable of the talents we read,† ‘When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all the nations, and He shall separate

\* Matt. xiii. 30.

† Matt. xxv. 31-33.

them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.' This teaching of our Lord, moreover, is echoed throughout the whole of the Apostolic Epistles. Such texts as the following are familiar to every student of Scripture: 'We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.'\* 'At the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power in flaming fire rendering vengeance to them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed.† 'Christ Jesus, who shall judge the quick and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom.‡ 'I saw a great white throne and Him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small,

\* 2 Cor. v. 10.

† 2 Thess. i. 7-10.

‡ 2 Tim. iv. 1.

standing before the throne, and books were opened : and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works.\*

It is not, however, necessary to multiply quotations from Scripture on this point. Its testimony is uniform and decisive that the Second Advent of Christ, accompanied as it will be by the resurrection of the body, will usher in the Final Judgment, and that before Christ Himself as the Judge each living soul will have to stand and to render up its awful account, and that on the judgment of that great day its eternal destiny will depend. All this Scripture teaches beyond a doubt ; but if the popular view of death (to which we have referred) be correct, if it be true that at death the righteous die and go to heaven and the wicked die and go to hell—that is, if they reach their final award at death—then the solemnities of the great Day of Judgment seem reduced to an unreality, and the session of the Judge on ‘the great white throne’ is merely the formal ratification of a silent judgment which had preceded it, in some cases, ages before.

But, on the other hand, if the development

\* Rev. xx. 11.



of character is still going on in the Intermediate State, if both the good and the evil are 'growing together until the harvest,' if the light and the darkness are each growing fuller and deeper, and the consummation of character is only reached when the soul is again united with the body, the body itself bearing either 'the mark of God on its forehead' or 'the mark of the beast,' then we can understand the tremendous significance the Judgment Day will have for every human soul, and how profound is the meaning of the words of St. Paul, 'We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body' [literally, 'through the body'] 'according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.'

5. Once more, the Intermediate State seems to be demanded for those to whom Christ has never been made known in this life, in order that they may reach that great crisis of life which must come to each soul when it has to decide either for Christ or against Him, on which the eternal destiny depends. As I shall have occasion to discuss this branch of my argument more fully in a subsequent chapter, it is sufficient for me now to say, in order to complete the evidence reason affords for the

Intermediate State, that it seems to be the teaching of Scripture that the eternal destiny of each human soul is determined by its relation to Christ, and that this relation in each case must consist either in explicit or implicit reception or rejection of His authority and love.

Now, if this be true, it certainly does appear to require the offer of the mercy of God in Christ to be made to each soul, in order that it may reach the supreme decision for or against its Lord. But in the case of the large majority of the human race this offer has never been made in this life. The great mass of mankind, if we include the generations who have passed away as well as those which are now living, have never had the opportunity either of believing or disbelieving in Christ. They have lived and have died in ignorance of Him whom the Father hath sent to be the Saviour of the world. All infants who died before intelligence and moral responsibility were reached; all idiots and lunatics in whom the light of reason has been extinguished or never kindled at all; all the uncounted millions of the heathen who have dwelt 'in darkness and in the shadow of death,' and who have never heard the name of Christ; many of the heathen in so-called



Christian lands who have never heard the Gospel preached, although the preachers were near their own doors, or, if they heard it, heard 'another Gospel which was not another'—the water of life being mixed with poison as it was given them to drink—all who have died in involuntary ignorance of the truth, seem to require an Intermediáte State, in which the opportunity that was denied on earth shall then be afforded of final decision for or against Christ, when either those sins of which Christ spoke and which were unforgiven on earth may be forgiven 'in the world to come,' or when the last damning sin—the 'sin unto death,' the sin of 'blasphemy of the Spirit'—shall be the 'eternal sin' of the lost.

## V.

### THE WITNESS OF THE CHURCH TO THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

IN the two previous chapters we have examined the evidence which Scripture and reason afford for the existence of the 'Intermediate State,' and it will serve to complete the argument if we endeavour to ascertain what has been the belief of the Church, in various ages and in different communions, on this subject.

We will begin first of all with the Fathers, a name given, as is well known, to a succession of more or less learned and pious men who occupied prominent positions in the Church—sometimes as bishops, sometimes as deacons—during the first twelve centuries of her history, and to whose authority as witnesses to the faith and expounders of its mysteries the Church of Rome attributes a peculiar and unique value, placing their doctrinal judgments and views

almost on a level with the teaching of Holy Scripture itself. It is hardly necessary, however, to say that the Protestant Churches of Europe, with the possible exception of the High Church party in the Anglican Church, have no such superstitious veneration for the authority of the Fathers as interpreters of Divine truth.

We believe that they were not less liable to err than any teacher of the truth in the present day; that in many respects they were more exposed to error, as they lived for the most part in an uncritical and superstitious age; that their judgments and opinions and their interpretation of Scripture are not therefore necessarily authoritative and decisive, but are to be received with intelligent and impartial criticism, as evidencing, when they are unanimous, the general theological opinion of their own age, but not as being infallibly true and necessarily in accordance with the one supreme authority to which we refer all disputed points either of faith or of doctrine, the authority of Holy Scripture itself. At the same time there is a real value to be attached to the opinion of the Fathers, especially if that opinion be at all widespread and practically unanimous. We see at once what was the ordinary belief of the Church in their day, what was the interpretation usually

given to any disputed passage of Scripture, and we are enabled at once to ascertain whether any particular doctrine is altogether novel and strange, or is a doctrine that has been believed and taught from the earliest ages as being in accordance with the faith of the Catholic Church. Now, the doctrine of the Intermediate State may fairly claim for itself whatsoever authority it may derive from having been held by the great Fathers of the Church up to the time of the Reformation, and so far from its being a modern novelty of opinion, it was the almost universal belief of all sections of the Church for the first sixteen centuries of her history. I will give only a few illustrative examples establishing this position.

Thus, Justin Martyr (A.D. 153) says: 'The souls of the pious take up a temporary abode in a better, those of the wicked in a worse, place.\*' He even stigmatizes as heretical the doctrine that souls are received into heaven immediately after death.

Irenæus (A.D. 171), who was a pupil of Polycarp, who in turn was himself a pupil of St. John, says: 'The souls of Christ's disciples go to the invisible place allotted them by God, and there remain till the resurrection awaiting that event;

\* 'Dial. c. Tryph.,' v. 80.

then receiving their bodies and rising in their entirety, that is, bodily, just as the Lord arose, they shall thus come into the presence of God.’\*

Tertullian (A.D. 190) rejects the sleep of the soul, and adduces the example of the rich man and Lazarus as proving that the soul is now in a state of either happiness or misery awaiting—to use Tertullian’s own words—‘the process of that judgment which is postponed till the last day.’† In another place, in treating of Hades, he says: ‘We have established the position that every soul is detained in safe keeping in Hades until the day of the Lord.’‡

Lactantius (A.D. 315) says: ‘Let no one imagine that souls are immediately judged after death. For all are detained in one and a common place of confinement until the arrival of the time in which the great Judge shall make an investigation of their deserts.’§

Origen (A.D. 210) held that before Christ no souls, not even those of the prophets and patriarchs, went to Paradise, but after the Lord Jesus had descended to Hades He transferred them to that ‘lower paradise,’ which Origen

\* ‘Adv. Heræs.,’ lib. v., c. 31.

† ‘De Resurr. Carn.,’ c. 17.

‡ ‘De Anim.,’ 55.

§ ‘Div. Inst.,’ lib. vii., c. 21.

distinguishes from the upper or 'third heaven,' and into this paradise Origen says the souls of pious Christians enter at death.

In another place he says: 'I think, therefore, that all the saints who depart from this life will remain in some place situated on the earth, which Scripture calls Paradise, as in some place of instruction, and, so to speak, class-room or school of souls, in which they are to be instructed regarding all things which they had seen on earth.'\*

Ambrose (A.D. 387) taught that 'the soul is separated from the body at death, and after the cessation of the earthly life is held in an ambiguous condition awaiting the final judgment.'†

Augustine (A.D. 385) says that 'the period which intervenes between the death and the final resurrection of man contains souls in secret receptacles who are treated according to their character and acts in the flesh.'‡

It is needless, however, to multiply quotations. The instances which have already been given will afford a fair summary of the general belief of the Church in the first four centuries on this subject; and after the time of Augustine it may be said that the doctrine of an Intermediate

\* 'De Prin.,' c. 11. † 'De Cain et Abel,' ii. 2.

‡ 'Enchirid.,' 119.

State was not only the uniform teaching of the Church up to the Reformation, but was gradually expanded and corrupted until, in the Roman Communion, it became known as purgatory. The modern Protestant doctrine, expressed in the familiar phrase of 'dying, and going to heaven or hell,'\* was certainly not the belief of the primitive Church, nor was it held by any considerable section of the Church, nor by any of the greater teachers of the Church, in any age before the Reformation. One exception, it ought to be added, was allowed to the Intermediate State: the souls of martyrs who had sealed their faith with their blood—so it was said—were admitted at once to the beatific vision of God in heaven; but all other souls were detained either in happiness or in torment in Hades, awaiting the resurrection of the body and the judgment of the last day. The late learned Bishop of Winchester, in his great work on the Articles of the Church of England, says (p. 86): 'I think it hardly necessary to add more to show that on this point (the Intermediate State) the opinion of the ancients is more correct than modern popular creeds.'

\* I use these terms as expressing the final states into which the dead enter after the last judgment.



We will now come to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on this subject. The Roman Catholic Church divides the unseen world into different categories or compartments of existence. First of all, there is heaven, which is the abode of perfect blessedness, where God eternally dwells, and where the holy angels and the spirits of just men made perfect also dwell in the possession of God. These spirits, however, consist of only two classes—first, those who enter heaven before the resurrection of the body, because they were perfectly purified at death; and next, those who, although not perfected at death, have become so through the discipline of purgatory. Next, there is hell, and here dwell all the lost, including all devils, all who deliberately reject the teaching of the Catholic Church, that is, all schismatics and heretics, unless—and here is a saving clause which may mean much or little, according to the personal character and bias of the Roman theologian—they are such from ‘invincible ignorance’; in short, all who die in a state of mortal sin—that is, of sin whose penalty is eternal death, and which has not been remitted through sincere repentance. After hell, we come to Hades, which, according to Roman theologians, up to the Ascension of



Christ was divided into the *Limbus Patrum* and the *Limbus Infantium*. In the former all the saints of the old Law dwelt until Christ descended into Hades, and, after 'harrowing hell,' delivered them from their captivity and carried them in triumph to heaven. In the latter are found all children dying unbaptized, none of whom will be admitted to the perfect glories and felicities of heaven, and also all who, to use the words of the Church, are in the position of these infants. On the exact amount of suffering and loss these poor outcasts of the kingdom have to endure there is some difference of opinion in the Roman Catholic Church; for whilst some have held that they suffer actual pain, others teach a milder doctrine, following Pope Innocent III., who said that 'although unbaptized infants are deprived for ever of the blessedness of the saints, they suffer neither sorrow nor sadness in consequence of that privation.' I make no remark on this characteristic Roman doctrine, save only to say that, although I believe most strongly in the Apostolic doctrine and practice of infant baptism, although I even hold that it is not impossible personal blessing may actually come on the unconscious child through the obedience of believing parents to Christ's com-

mand, yet if I believed that any little children who died without baptism, from no fault of their own—as is constantly the case—as, for example, from sudden illness and death, or from the conscientious convictions of their parents being opposed altogether to infant baptism, or from being born in a heathen land—that these little ones, including, I suppose, a considerable proportion of the whole human race, were to be excluded for ever from the Father's house for what was no sin, not even a fault of their own, I should find it very hard to say, 'God is love.'

To resume our exposition. It is the doctrine of purgatory which gives to the Roman doctrine of the Intermediate State its specific and most characteristic features. Purgatory, according to the teaching of Rome, is that state into which all who do not die in mortal sin, but who are not perfect at death, enter, and in which they endure the process of expiation and purification. This expiatory and purifying discipline is always proportioned to the impurity and guilt of the sufferer, and has no definite limit save that of the Judgment Day; but souls in purgatory may have their sufferings alleviated and shortened by the prayers of the faithful, by the intercession of

the saints, and, above all, by the sacrifice of the Mass. Further, it is in the power of the Pope, as the Vicar of Christ on earth, to declare that the advantages of certain indulgences may be applied to the soul in purgatory. These indulgences consist in the application of the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ for the remission of the temporal punishment which may remain due to sin after its guilt has been remitted. Further, these indulgences are granted to the performance of certain specified good works, such as prayer, almsgiving, and fasting.

It was the corruption of the truth involved in the Roman doctrine of purgatory, and the horrible evils which that doctrine brought in its train, which roused Martin Luther's fiercest and hottest indignation against Rome. A Dominican friar, Tetzel by name, was sent through Europe to dispense Papal indulgences, which exempted those who possessed them from the disciplinary sufferings of purgatory, and Tetzel claimed to be on a level with the Apostle Peter, and even made it his boast that he had saved more souls than the Apostle himself! 'Distinguished by an unblushing countenance and stentorian voice, with the Papal red cross borne aloft, and the Papal brief prominently displayed to view, he

proclaimed aloud the merit of his Papal pardons, while his companion, Friar Bartholomew, shouted always as he closed, 'Come and buy! Come and buy!' 'One penny!' he said, 'dropped into the box for a soul in purgatory, and as soon as the money clinked in the chest the soul flew up to heaven.'\*

It was this abominable and shameless traffic that stirred the soul of Luther to indignation. 'God willing,' he said, 'I will beat a hole in that man's drum;' and it was not long after that he nailed on the door of the church his famous ninety-five theses against indulgences, which he offered to maintain against all opponents by word of mouth or writing. Luther saw the wicked corruption of the truth this doctrine of purgatory involved; he saw the enormous power it put into the hands of an unscrupulous priesthood, and the mechanical and material conception of salvation it was sure to foster in the minds of unlearned and ignorant people, and he determined to destroy the whole thing, root and branch. We cannot blame him for this; but Protestant theology has suffered in consequence of the Reformation, not only rightly rejecting the Roman doctrine of purgatory, but

\* 'Leaders of the Reformation,' by J. Tulloch, D.D., p. 17

passing in silence over the truth which was underlying it, and of which purgatory was the corruption and distortion. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that the Protestant and Reformed Churches of Europe say nothing about the doctrine of an Intermediate State in their authoritative confessions and creeds. All of them agree in the rejection of the Roman doctrine of purgatory, the Church of England, for example, saying, in the Twenty-second Article, that 'it is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God;' but so far as I know there is not one great Protestant communion or creed which explicitly recognises and teaches the doctrine of the Intermediate State in its public confession of faith.\* The 'Westminster Confession of Faith' (chap. 32) says: 'The bodies of men after death return to dust and see corruption, but

\* It is remarkable that the Third Article of the Forty-two Articles of the Church of England of 1542 was as follows: 'As Christ died and was buried for us, so also it is to be believed that He went downe into Hell. For the bodie laie in the sepulchre untill the Resurrection, but His Ghoste departing from Him, was with the Ghostes that were in prison, or in Helle, and didde preache to the same, as the place of St. Peter doeth testifie.' It is significant that this article was omitted in the 'Thirty-nine Articles' of 1563.

their souls (which neither die nor sleep), having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of the body; and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Besides these two places for souls separated from the bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.'

It may be possible so to interpret even this Article in the Westminster Confession as to make it include all that is really valuable in the doctrine of the Intermediate State which we have been considering; but there is little doubt, I imagine, that the Divines who drew up the Confession were so anxious to sever themselves entirely from Roman doctrine that they meant to deny even the existence of an Intermediate State as held by the Fathers of the ancient Church, and they committed themselves to the very questionable assertion that closes the Article: 'Besides these two places,' that is heaven and hell, 'for souls separated from the bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.'



There is, however, one exception to the Protestant denial of the Intermediate State. Emmanuel Swedenborg, in whose works are to be found the keenest spiritual intuition and the most extraordinary and imaginative assertions, taught that there was a state intermediate to heaven and to hell, which he called 'the world of spirits,' and into this world both good and bad enter at death. He further taught that at the end of every dispensation the Lord enters the world of spirits to accomplish a judgment there, and to separate the wheat from the tares, and the sheep from the goats. Such a judgment attended Christ's First Advent, and another and a similar judgment took place at the Second Advent, which, according to Swedenborg, occurred at the founding of the new Church, an advent Swedenborg says he witnessed. At these judgments of souls the righteous and the wicked were assigned to their respective abodes in heaven or hell, the one enduring the punishment consequent on their sins, the other rejoicing in the love and light of God.

Only one other Church remains to be considered, the ancient Greek Church, comprising among its members the greater part of the inhabitants of Russia, Siberia, Greece, Mon-



tenegro, Servia, Roumania, and a considerable number in Armenia, Abyssinia, and Austria; in all numbering some 97,000,000 of souls.

The Greek Church entirely rejects the Roman doctrine of purgatory, and holds the doctrine of the Intermediate State very much in the form in which, as we have seen, it was taught by the Fathers of the Church. Thus, for example, in the Larger Catechism of the Eastern Church, in answer to the question, 'In what state are the souls of the dead till the general resurrection?' the answer is made, 'The souls of the righteous are in light and rest, with a foretaste of eternal happiness; but the souls of the wicked are in a state the reverse of this;' and then it adds the following question and answer: 'Why may we not ascribe to the souls of the righteous perfect happiness immediately after death?' 'Because it is ordained that the perfect retribution according to works shall be received by the perfect man after the resurrection of the body and God's last judgment.' In addition, the Eastern Church teaches that such souls as have departed this life in the faith, but have had no time to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, may be aided 'towards the attainment of a blessed resurrection by prayers

offered on their behalf, especially such as are offered in union with the oblation of the bloodless sacrifices of the Body and Blood of Christ, and by works of mercy done in faith for their memory.'

Such is a brief summary of the teaching of the various Churches in Christendom on the Intermediate State. The early Fathers generally believed and taught the doctrine; the Roman Church corrupted and perverted it into purgatory; the Greek Church retained it in its earlier and purer form, modified, however, by its teaching in regard to the influence of prayer for the dead on those who have departed this life; whilst the Protestant Churches are either silent on the doctrine, or, as in the case of the Westminster Confession, deny it altogether.

## VI.

### ITS RELATION TO THE DEAD.

THE disembodied spirits who have passed into the Intermediate State, there to await the resurrection of the body, and the final judgment which will take place at the Second Advent of Christ, may be divided into three classes. There are, first of all, those who have believed in Christ during this life, and who are therefore 'with Christ,' enjoying the perfect rest and felicity of His presence; then, there are those to whom the offer of mercy and of eternal life in Christ was made known whilst they were on the earth, but who have rejected it, and have 'judged themselves unworthy of eternal life'; and, lastly, there is that large class composed, as we shall see, of a great variety of elements, to whom Christ was never made known during life, and who cannot therefore either have accepted or rejected the great

salvation He came to bestow. I wish to inquire in this chapter, and in that which is to follow, what relation the Intermediate State bears to each of these widely divergent classes and what effect it may reasonably be supposed to have on their eternal interests.

I. And, first of all, let us consider those who have been saved by faith in Jesus Christ.

That imperfection and sin cling to all Christians, even to the holiest, although doubtless in ever lessening degree, and cling to them up to the very hour of death, is a truth not only taught in Scripture, but is witnessed by the Christian consciousness in every age. Notwithstanding this fact, it is also plainly declared in Scripture that all human imperfection and sin are removed in heaven. Nothing 'that defileth'\* can enter there; the servants of Christ will be 'like Him,' for they shall 'see Him as He is';† they are manifested 'with Him in glory,'‡ and the righteous shall 'shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.'§

All this is too certainly taught in Scripture to admit of doubt; but then there arises at once the deep and perplexing question: How are those imperfections and sins which we

\* Rev. xxi. 27.

‡ Col. iii. 4.

† 1 John iii. 2.

§ Matt. xiii. 43.

admit cling to the best Christians up to the close of this mortal life removed at death? How is the saint, dying imperfect here, perfected the moment he enters the next world? Can death remove those moral impurities of the soul which life was powerless to erase? Now, to these questions the life of the soul in Hades affords—I will not say a full and complete reply, but—a sufficient and intelligible answer.

No thoughtful man can imagine that death as such can have any moral power over the spiritual life. Death is a purely physical process; it is the dissolution for the time of the union between the soul and the body, and a merely physical process can never have a moral significance. The physical may indirectly affect, and often does indirectly affect, the spiritual, just as pain of body may refine and chasten the soul; but to think that such great spiritual results as are involved in the complete sanctification of the believer can follow from *death as such* is to invest it with a significance and power which are magical and superstitious rather than spiritual and rational.

This, however, is by no means the same thing as saying that the consequences of death may not have a profound effect on the soul; or,

to put the same truth into other words, although the mere act of dying can have no spiritual and transforming power over the life of the soul, yet the state into which death introduces the spirit may have a potent and blessed effect on the spiritual life.

For, in the first place, the dead are delivered by death from the body, and as in the body many of the fiercest temptations to sin took their rise during this mortal life, the dead are freed in one moment from all the sollicitations and lusts of the flesh.

Who can measure the new-born sense of freedom, and the happiness of those who have no longer to keep watch and ward against the innumerable and deadly foes which in this life assaulted the soul, entering by the gateway of the senses? Who can tell the joy of being delivered for ever from 'the body of this death,' of being emancipated from the tyranny and peril of sense, and of entering on a life that is purely spiritual in the eternal world?

Then, again, even when the body is not the servant of sin, it is often the cause of weakness and of misery to the soul. 'The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak,' groaned the Apostle, and a great multitude of weary sufferers have echoed this groan in every age.

Death, however, not only destroys all possibility of temptation from the flesh, but it releases the soul from the prison-house in which it was so long held captive. It strikes the fetters off the limbs of the prisoner, and sets him free—free in that glorious world of light to serve God without weariness and without pain. In one moment the soul is dowered with the energies of immortal youth.

Then, again, not only are the temptations due to the flesh excluded from Hades, but all the subtle and terrible temptations of the devil are also shut out. Temptation belongs only to probation, and the moment probation ceases temptation ceases also. Death shuts the door for ever against all those hosts of 'spiritual wickedness in heavenly places' which here assaulted the soul, seeking its ruin; it removes the saints to a land where the sound of battle is never heard, where

'Beyond these voices there is peace,'

and where they 'enter the rest that remaineth for the people of God.' And as all the temptations of the devil are excluded from the Intermediate State, so also are all those seductions to evil which came from evil men and evil companions in this world. The soul, so to



speak, no longer breathes a polluted air, but lives in an atmosphere too pure for sin; and instead of that daily contact with the wicked and with wickedness, which is at once the lot and the sorrow of all the righteous here, there is the companionship of the holy, the blessed society of the redeemed, where heart answers to heart in perfect sympathy and accord, and all are dear children in the Father's House.

Above all, there will be the presence of the Lord and Saviour Himself manifested to His own people in the disembodied state. Here they are 'absent from the Lord,' and they see Him not, or see Him but dimly, and as in 'a mirror'; there they shall see Him 'face to face,' and shall be 'for ever with the Lord,' and dwell in the light of His presence all the day long. It was this hope, 'the blessed hope,' as St. Paul calls it, of the vision of his Lord, of an immediate consciousness of His presence, and of a nearer access to His love, which made death so dear to St. Paul, and which led him to say, 'I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is very far better'; and it is the fruition of this hope that is the crown of the joy and bliss of all who have passed into the Paradise of God.

If we gather together these considerations,

if we remember that death frees the soul from all the lusts and temptations of the flesh, that it delivers it also from the imperfections and weaknesses of this mortal body, that it makes all further temptations and solicitations to evil, whether from evil spirits or evil men, impossible, that it separates the redeemed from contact with the sin and corruption of this wicked world, whilst it introduces them for ever into the society of the holy and the pure, and, more than all, that it brings them into the open vision and presence of the Lord of Glory Himself, we shall have, I think, a sufficient, even if not a complete, answer to the question we asked at the outset—how the imperfections and sins which even cling to the best Christians are removed after death. Nor is this all. The exclusion of all positive imperfection and sin from Hades is not the only blessed result of death. Under the new conditions of the spiritual life in the Intermediate State, in the immediate presence of the Lord, and with His own gracious teaching, surely we may believe there will be possibilities of growth in spiritual things undreamt of here. This life, at best, forms but an uncongenial soil in which the trees of the Lord have to grow, and there are bitter winds and biting frosts, which

destroy the tender blossom of the spring, and there are storms which wreck the fruit of autumn; but when the tree is transplanted from earth into the garden of Paradise, in that fairer land and under those sunnier skies, vexed by no drought by day, and torn by no colds at night, with its roots ever abiding in the kindlier and more fertile soil, it shall bear such an abundance of fruit as shall at last fulfil Christ's own desire—that His disciples should bear 'much fruit.'

It is to this constant and blessed spiritual growth in the Intermediate State those texts seem to refer, which have already been quoted in a former chapter: 'Being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it up to the day of Jesus Christ.'\* 'Waiting for the revelation of Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you to the end';† and it is into this blessed state of light and peace and joy the saints and patriarchs of old, and all who have lived and died in Christ, have entered, waiting the consummation of their bliss in the resurrection of the body, that 'they without us should not be made perfect.' This, we may believe, will be the experience of all the people of God who pass through the

\* Phil. i. 6.

† 1 Cor. i. 8.

gates of death into that eternal world. Like Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, they shall be 'comforted'—comforted with the thought that the sorrows and temptations of life are past for ever; comforted with the new joy of freedom from the burden of the body; comforted with the society of the redeemed in a world where all are pure; comforted, above all, with the presence and vision of Christ, never again to be lost; and as they dwell in His light and love, and grow in 'grace and in the knowledge' of their Lord, they shall 'go from strength to strength,' looking for the coming of the day when He whom they love shall descend from heaven 'with His holy angels,' and the trump of God be heard, and they shall be 'clothed upon with their house, which is from heaven,' their whole nature at last perfected in Christ, soul and body alike sharing in His glorious redemption. And then at last 'death and Hades shall be cast into the lake of fire,'\* and they shall enter the eternal city of God, and in the beatific vision of God find heaven for evermore.

II. Of the relation which the Intermediate State bears to the wicked, Scripture says comparatively little, but such hints as it affords we

\* Rev. xx. 14.

may reverently gather up, even though they cast but a dim light on so solemn and awful a subject as the state of the lost. We have already seen that in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus the rich man is said to be in 'Hades,' and 'in torment,' 'in anguish,' and further, that he is separated from Abraham and Lazarus by a 'great gulf,' which is fixed, and which none can pass over. The moral divergencies and separation of character which first become noticeable in this life are finally and irrevocably fixed in the life to come, nor can any further interposition take place on the part of the saved to succour and to redeem the lost. 'They which would pass from here to you,' Abraham is represented as saying to the rich man, 'cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from hence.'\* So, too, we read† of 'the angels which kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation,' being 'kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day,' and in another passage in another epistle‡ we read that 'the angels when they sinned' were cast down by God 'to hell, and committed to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment,' both of which passages confirm the teaching of

\* Luke xvi. 26.      † Jude 6.      ‡ 2 Pet. ii. 4.

the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, that, although the Intermediate State in Hades is not the final and eternal state of the dead, yet for the lost it is a state of inconceivable anguish and suffering, preparatory to, and premonitory of, the still more terrible doom which will be pronounced on them at 'the judgment of the great day.'

And this is only what reason itself would lead us to expect, for if we reverse all that has been said in the former part of this paper concerning those who are saved; if we think of the lost surrounded by companions as evil as themselves, and ever breathing a polluted air, whilst Satan, whom they served on earth, claims his infernal rights over them, and urges them on to fresh acts of rebellion against God; if, in addition to this, we remember that in Hades they are deprived of the body whose lusts they gratified on earth, deprived, that is, of the possibility of gratifying sense, although keeping the torment of the lust which longs for gratification; if we ponder the meaning of that awful monotone of memory, 'Son, remember!' as the opportunities neglected, the warnings despised, the mercy rejected, the love spurned over and over again during their earthly life come back to view, and conscience within



scourges them with the pangs of bitter remorse, whilst over them burns as a fiery cloud the hot displeasure of God, we may have some feeble conception of the terrible meaning the Intermediate State has to the lost.

Further, there is one hint in Scripture of the possible development of evil in the Intermediate State which ought not to be passed over without notice. In the well-known parable of the tares and the wheat, our Lord says that the command is given, 'Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into My barn.'<sup>\*</sup> What this harvest is Christ Himself declares: 'The harvest is the end of the world'—'the consummation of the ages,' as the margin of the Revised Version has it—'and the reapers are the angels.' Our Lord expressly declares that both evil and good—the tares and the wheat—will 'grow together until the harvest,' and I suppose these words must carry with them the meaning that such of the evil and of the good as have entered the unseen state of the dead are there developing the same character, either for evil or for good, they bore on earth. These

\* Matt. xiii. 30.



future developments of character in Hades may in many cases be the first public declaration of the real character of the lost. Here evil as well as goodness is often immature and undeveloped; character exists rather in germ than in fruit, and seems to require a state in which its true nature shall be made known and its complete development made. Hades may reveal the secret character which had long existed within. In addition to this, the facilities for the development of evil in Hades may be as large as the corresponding facilities for the development of goodness, and there may be witnessed in that unseen world of spirits new and surprising revelations of the rapidity with which sin works in the lost, and of the awful lengths to which the soul may go in rebellion against God.

To sum up all that has been said: Hades is at once a state of inconceivable blessedness and peace, and of equally inconceivable punishment and suffering; of blessedness and peace for the saved, of punishment and suffering for the lost; but in both cases the moral conditions of the life of that mysterious world of disembodied spirits seem to point to the certainty of larger and fuller developments both of the good and of the evil in human

character. Hades may therefore be the connecting link between the life of probation here and the final judgment which will take place at the second advent of Christ. Its relation to those to whom Christ has not been made known during the present life is so large and important a subject that it must be reserved for our next chapter.

## VII.

### ITS RELATION TO THOSE TO WHOM CHRIST HAS NOT BEEN MADE KNOWN IN THIS LIFE.

IN our last chapter we endeavoured to ascertain the moral and spiritual results of the Intermediate State, both on those who have been saved by Christ, and on those who had died in unbelief rejecting the mercy of God as offered to them in Christ Jesus. The more difficult task now awaits us of examining the special relation the Intermediate State has to the dead to whom in this life the offer of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ has not been made known; and we shall find, I think, that it is this large class—by far the majority of all mankind—which gives to the doctrine of the Intermediate State its special and most solemn significance.

1. That the New Testament expressly teaches that the salvation of every human being depends

on the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ is a proposition which is capable of abundant and overwhelming proof. Our Lord Himself declared, 'I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one cometh unto the Father but by Me.\*' And the Apostle Peter, 'filled,' as we are told, 'with the Holy Ghost,' and speaking, therefore, with all the authority of God Himself, said of Jesus Christ, 'In none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, whereby we must be saved.†' That there is no possibility of the pardon of sin save through the atonement of Christ; that He, and He alone, has been exalted to be 'a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance . . . and remission of sins;' that eternal life is only to be found in Jesus Christ our Lord, and that out of Christ there is no salvation, are statements which are borne out by the whole substance and structure of Apostolic teaching. Reason itself echoes and corroborates the teaching of Scripture on this point, for we cannot imagine that the eternal Son of God, the Creator and Lord of all worlds, would have humbled Himself to our low estate, would have endured the bitter agony and shame of the

\* John xiv. 6.

† Acts iv. 12.

Cross, if salvation had been possible in any other way. The Incarnation and the Sacrifice of Christ are the most solemn of all proofs that the words of St. Peter, that there is salvation 'in none other' than Christ, were not heedless rhetoric, were not a poetical exaggeration of a fact, but were the sober and emphatic declaration of the truth.

2. Scripture, however, goes farther than to declare the salvation of every human soul is possible only through Christ and His Atonement; it further teaches us that it is on man's personal relation to Christ as evidenced by his faith or his unbelief that his eternal destiny depends. It would be necessary to quote a far larger number of texts than could be included within our necessary limits if we desired to set forth the full amount of the teaching of Scripture on this subject, but such verses as the following will at once occur to every reader of the New Testament: 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.'\* 'He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life, but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.'† 'I am

\* John iii. 16.

† John iii. 36.

the living bread which came down out of heaven ; if any man shall eat of this bread he shall live for ever : yea, and the bread which I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world.\* ‘ I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die.’† The message of St. Paul to the Philippian jailer was, ‘ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved ;’‡ and in another place he writes : ‘ The Scripture hath shut up all things under sin that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given them that believe.’§ The Apostle John witnesses to the same truth in the whole of his First Epistle, the keynote of which is the declaration, ‘ We have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world ;’|| and, ‘ The witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son ;’ ‘ He that hath the Son hath life ; he that hath not the Son hath not life.’¶

It is unnecessary, however, to multiply quotations from Scripture, for the fact itself is one of the prominent and specific features of our

\* John vi. 51.

† John xi. 25.

‡ Acts xvi. 31.

§ Gal. iii. 22.

|| I John iv. 14.

¶ I John v. 11, 12.

Christian Gospel; and here again, as before, reason echoes and corroborates the voice of Scripture, for unless salvation is to be a magical process, a sovereign act of God outside the human will altogether, we cannot imagine the Lord Jesus Christ saving men irrespectively of their attitude to Himself, nor can we think that a salvation which in its deepest elements means moral and spiritual regeneration of the heart, a salvation, in a word, that is profoundly ethical in its fruit, could come to any man independently of his own attitude to Christ. Repentance from sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are not accidental conditions appended to the offer of mercy, and which may or may not be insisted upon; they are the necessary moral and spiritual conditions on which the bestowal of the Divine gift itself depends, and without which Christ Jesus Himself cannot save the soul.

3. If these two positions are established and accepted, if we believe, first of all, that the salvation of the human race depends solely on the redemptive work of Christ, and, secondly, that His redemptive work must be accepted and welcomed if it is to avail for the sinner, then a third result inevitably follows. If apart from Christ there is no salvation offered to



any man, and if apart from faith in Christ there is no possibility of the offered salvation being accepted, then it follows that Christ must be made known to every human soul in order that the offer of mercy, and therefore the possibility of salvation, may be placed within its reach. I do not say—and I ask my readers carefully to note the caution—that Christ is to be made known to all men in order to ensure their salvation. The salvation of the world was doubtless the gracious purpose of God in the gift of His Son, and it is for the same purpose we are commanded to ‘preach the Gospel to the whole creation’; but we may defeat the purpose of God by our sin and unbelief, for we may refuse the offered mercy, and reject the gracious gift. To say that Christ must be made known to each individual soul is not, therefore, the same thing as saying that each one will inevitably be saved, either here or hereafter. All I contend for is, that the offer of mercy in Christ must be made to every man either in this life or in that which is to come, that once, at least, there may come to every human soul that solemn crisis in its experience when it stands face to face with Christ Himself, hears from His own lips the words of salvation and of eternal life, and has to make

the great decision on which its eternal destiny will depend.

Nor are we without the warrant of Scripture in asserting the necessity of the proclamation of the Gospel to all true faith in Christ. 'How shall they believe on Him of whom they have not heard?' asks St. Paul; and then he adds the words: 'So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.'\* The whole of our missionary work abroad, and of our evangelistic work at home, rests on the conviction that the turning-point in the destiny of every human soul is reached when it accepts or rejects the authority and the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is clearly essential for Christ to be made known ere this turning-point can be reached.

4. And now let us advance a step farther in our argument. It is only the minority of the human race who have heard of Christ during this life, for the great mass of mankind—if we reckon the dead as well as the living—have never had the opportunity for that great decision for or against Christ which we have seen is the crisis in every human life. The truth of this statement will be evident the moment we consider the various classes of our

\* Rom. x. 17.

fellow-men to whom Christ has not been made known in life. Omitting for the time all reference to the myriads of little children who die in early infancy long before the dawn of moral responsibility, and to idiots, on whom the light of reason has never shone, and to lunatics, in whom that light has been quenched in darkness, all of whom will come up again for consideration later on ; let us consider, first of all, the heathen nations of the world. There are millions upon millions of heathens now living in 'darkness and the shadow of death' who have not so much as heard of the Name of Jesus. The most liberal estimate that can be made of the number of professing Christians in the world, as compared with the number of the heathen outside the light of Christianity, is, I believe, only about one in four, so that if the population of the globe be estimated at about twelve hundred millions, at least one thousand millions of these are heathen nations, and of these I suppose it is no exaggeration to say the majority have not so much as heard of Christ and His great salvation. The heathen, moreover, who are now living are the merest fragment of the whole number of those who have never known Christ, for we have to add to them the countless myriads who in ages past

have lived and died in total ignorance of the Gospel.

Nor can we forget there are heathen at home as well as heathen abroad—heathens in a Christian land, born into a life of sin, many of whom have had their ears choked with curses from the cradle upwards, whose tongue was taught to blasphème as soon as it could speak, who drank in vice and uncleanness with their mothers' milk, whose bodies often bear the print and stamp of their parents' sin and shame, who live without one breath of pure air reaching their polluted homes, who are the outcasts and the despair alike of our churches and our civilization, plague-spots on our modern life, and whose bitter cry is even now going up to heaven—heathens as dark and as degraded and as ignorant of Christ as any in the heart of Africa or of China. Have all these wretched and degraded outcasts, drunk with vice and crime, whose life-blood was poisoned ere it began to flow in their veins, have all of them had what with deepest reverence we may call as fair a chance of being saved as those who were born under happier conditions? Some of them, possibly, have not even heard the Gospel of Christ, have never known what His dear love means, have never seen the bright-

ness of His face ; and of those who have heard the Gospel, others may not have heard it in its Divine simplicity and purity, for the Water of Life given them to drink may have been mingled with poisonous superstition, or may have been made muddy and foul by having been drawn from streams trampled on by the feet of theological controversy. I do not deny for one moment that some of these heathen at home have sinned against light and knowledge, and these God will judge ; but, on the other hand, is it possible to think that for the whole of them this life has in any sense decided their eternal relation to Christ ?

5. In addition to these myriads of heathen abroad and to those at home who have never heard Christ's Gospel, and who cannot, therefore, have rejected Him, there is another and a wholly different class to be added, unlike them in every respect save in this, that they, too, have never fully and fairly heard the voice of Christ speaking to them : I refer to those—whether many or few in number only God knows—who are labouring under what theologians call ' invincible ignorance ' of the things of Christ. Through the bias of early education, or from structural defect of intellect, or from the mastering results of hereditary unbelief,

they are 'colour blind' to spiritual truths, and never see them in their proper hues and tones, and they turn away from the Gospel, not so much from pride of intellect, or sin of heart, or obstinacy of will, as from sheer incapacity to perceive the greatness and the glory of the Gospel itself.

With such unbelief is a disease, and not a crime, and is not moral either in its origin or in its issues, and, accordingly, in many of these cases we find unbelief, or perhaps I ought rather to say misbelief, united with the most unselfish philanthropy and great purity and benevolence of life and a genuine love of goodness. Not many years ago I knew a man who was a typical illustration of the class to whom I am now referring. A friend and helper of the poor, a teacher of the ignorant, he literally lived to do good to others, and his whole life was spent in unselfish and generous aims; he had, moreover, such visions of the love of God as often to shame those who professed a richer and a truer faith, and yet this man lived and died rejecting both the Deity and the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was the ineradicable twist given to his convictions by his birth and early education that accounted for his unhappy failure in faith; and yet if this



man is ever to be saved, and there are at least others like him, how is he to be saved? He had no faith in Christ as a Divine Saviour so long as he lived on earth; whence is he to gain that faith without which there is no 'eternal life'?

6. I come, last of all, to those whom I have already mentioned, who have not attained moral responsibility during their mortal life, a class that includes all infants who die during the years of infancy, and all idiots and lunatics who have either never possessed or who have lost the light of reason.

During the last century Evangelical theologians have generally taught the salvation of all children who are cut off by death in infancy. It may be a little difficult to determine how this belief has arisen in the Church, whether it is an indirect result of the ancient doctrine of baptismal regeneration, or whether it is a precarious inference from some of the words of our Lord; but it is at least certain that the salvation of all infants dying during infancy is now the accepted doctrine of the Evangelical Protestant Churches. It is not a little curious, however, to note that this doctrine is of comparatively modern origin. Calvin taught the damnation of all infants who were not elect to eternal life, although he himself confessed it



was 'a horrible decree'; and Luther denied the salvation of all unbaptized infants, a denial in which the whole Roman Catholic Church still agrees. The Greek Church also maintains that infants dying unbaptized are unsaved; the Westminster Confession restricts the salvation of infants to 'elect infants'; but I believe I am right in saying the whole, or nearly the whole, of Evangelical Protestant Christendom now affirms the certainty of the salvation of all who die before years of discretion and responsibility are reached.

I confess I see grave difficulties both in the ancient and in the more modern doctrine on this subject. If it be horrible, as it is horrible, to imagine that little children are damned because they were not 'elect,' or because they died unbaptized, may it not be equally presumptuous to conclude they are necessarily saved because they died in infancy? On a subject so mysterious, and on which Scripture gives so little light, I desire to speak with the greatest humility and reserve, and with all possible diffidence, but I ask does it seem perfectly consistent with the stainless equity of all God's dealings with man to assume that the accident, so to speak, of an early death, should for ever release a child

from the grave perils which belong to probation here, and should ensure its eternal salvation altogether apart from its acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ? I wish to speak, I again repeat, with the utmost reverence and humility on so mysterious a subject, but surely we may ask whether the great Scriptural truth that salvation depends on personal faith in Christ is annulled in the case of nearly one-fourth of the whole human race, or if it be said that it is possible children dying without the knowledge of Christ here can come to know Him and to love Him hereafter, then, at least, it is admitted that faith in Christ may be reached after death in some cases in which it is not reached here. And again, if it be certainly true that all infants dying as such are necessarily saved, are there any parents anywhere who would not be tempted to pray the unnatural prayer that their children might be taken from them before responsibility with all its heavy issues dawned upon them, and who would not sympathize in the words I once heard the late Professor Henry Rogers utter: 'For my part, I should not grieve if the whole race of mankind died in its fourth year. As far as I can see, I do not know that it would be a thing much to be lamented'?

A similar course of reasoning will apply to idiots and to lunatics. There is no responsibility for belief or for action in either case, and there can be no condemnation, therefore, for unbelief; but will their eternal salvation, because of the absence of this moral responsibility here, be any more just? Does it not seem more in harmony with the great moral laws which govern our race, more consonant with the infinite justice of God, more in accordance with the eternal verities of the Gospel of Christ, that in all such cases the probation which was impossible in this life should be made possible in another, that to them, not less than to us, the supreme opportunity should be given for the last and solemn decision of the will for or against Christ on which the issues of eternity depend?

It is when we think of these various classes to whom Christ has not been made known in this world, of the multitudes of the heathen, some of whom have died without ever hearing of the Saviour of the world, and others of whom are now living and will die without the knowledge of Christ, of the inhabitants of Christian lands who are practically heathen, and some at least of whom have never had the opportunity for repentance and faith placed

fairly within their power, when we add to these those who have been so biased by causes which they could not control as to be unable to perceive 'the truth as it is in Jesus,' and, last of all, when we remember how many live and die without reaching moral responsibility, that the need of some state between death and the last judgment, in which Christ shall be made known, becomes most imperious and pressing. Probation after judgment is impossible, but probation before judgment is essential, and I am unable to see how this probation can be reached for the whole of mankind save in the Intermediate State.

7. It is sometimes urged as an objection to any probation after death for those who have never heard of Christ, that it is sufficient to believe that all men, including the heathen, will be judged according to the light they possessed, and the use they have made of the light. Whatever truth there may be in this statement concerning those who live in a Christian land, in the case of the great mass of the heathen it affords but little hope for their future state. Here and there may be found, I do not doubt, among the heathen such loyalty to conscience and such fidelity to the truth it reveals as to constitute an implicit although unconscious

acceptance of Christ; but even in such cases how is this implicit faith to become that explicit and conscious reception of Him which Scripture declares to be necessary to salvation? It has certainly not taken place in this life. Is not the inference irresistible that it will as certainly take place in the next? But these elect spirits of heathendom are surely the small minority as compared with the great mass who live and die in what is too truly called 'heathen darkness,' and if it be impossible to think of their eternal condemnation, even though they be 'beaten with few stripes,' on the ground of the misuse they made of the dim and uncertain light they possessed, is it not equally impossible to believe they will be eternally saved because they were heathen? Does it not seem—and I prefer to put the question in a tentative rather than in a more dogmatic way—as if the gracious equity of God's dealings required another state in which the Christ who has not been made known in this life shall be revealed, and in which those solemn issues of decision which are placed before us shall be placed before them?

If this be so, where is this state to be found save in the Intermediate State? Heaven and hell are final and fixed states in which change is impossible, for the idea of endless probation

is absurd and self-contradictory; but in the dim and mysterious world of souls into which all the dead are gathered it is possible that St. Peter's words may have a larger application than even he gave to them: 'For to this end was the Gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.'

8. Nor does the doctrine of probation after death, thus defined and guarded, tend to lessen in the smallest degree the sense of human responsibility here, or logically end in an optimistic universalism.

On the contrary, it emphasizes the impressive significance of responsibility by denying that it is reached until the decision of the will has been given for or against Christ, and it denies universalism by admitting that both here and hereafter it is possible for the soul to 'refuse Him that speaketh,' and to sin the 'sin unto death.'



## VIII.

### PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD.

WE now come to an interesting question connected with the Intermediate State, namely, prayers for the dead, and we shall endeavour to ascertain whether such prayers are in accordance with the teaching of Holy Scripture, and with the belief and practice of the primitive Church or not. Before, however, entering on this inquiry it is necessary to define more carefully the limits of the question that we seek to answer. When the lawfulness, or otherwise, of prayers for the dead is discussed, it is only fair to bear in mind that the benefit of these prayers is limited by those who believe in them to such as have died in the faith of Christ. So far as I know, those Churches, or those individual members of particular Churches, who have taught and practised prayer on behalf of the dead have always



restricted the benefit of these intercessions to those who have not wilfully rejected the mercy of God in Christ, or who have died in the possession of His salvation.

In order to arrive at a just conclusion on this subject it will be well to divide our inquiry into two parts, and to ask, first, what has been the practice of the Church in regard to prayers for the dead; and, secondly, whether Holy Scripture sanctions or condemns the practice in question.

I. I begin with the ancient Jewish Church. I believe it is generally admitted that before the time of the Maccabees we can find no distinct and authentic record of prayers for the dead being offered by the Jews. During the period covered by the records of the Old Testament, and as far down as the close of the prophetic Canon with the prophet Malachi—that is, to about B.C. 519—we can find no trace of the practice; but then it is urged that we can draw no adverse conclusion from this remarkable silence of the Old Testament on the subject, as it is only part of its uniform silence and reserve on the state of the soul after death. Where so little is revealed—so it is said—concerning the future life, it is surely not wonderful if a habit which could only be

founded on a definite belief in the future state had not yet sprung up.

When we pass, however, beyond the records of the Old Testament, and come to the interval which lies between Malachi and Matthew—a period of Jewish history which in some respects was the most remarkable and glorious in the national life of the people—we certainly find some evidence that the practice of praying for the dead was not unknown to pious Jews. In the second book of the Maccabees\* we are told that Judas ‘made a gathering throughout the company of the sum of 2,000 drachms of silver’ on behalf of the families of the slain, and sent it to Jerusalem to offer ‘for a sin-offering, doing therein very well and honestly, in that he was mindful of the resurrection’; and then the words are added, ‘For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should have risen again, it had been superfluous and vain to pray for the dead.’ It is hardly necessary to say that I do not quote these words as an authoritative declaration on the subject, for the Apocrypha has no kind of claim to the authority of Scripture; but I adduce them simply for their historical value, as evidence that in the time of Judas Maccabæus belief in

\* Chap. xii. 43, *sqq.*

the lawfulness of prayer for the dead was not unknown, and it has been said there is nothing in the narrative to lead us to suppose that in ordering these prayers for his dead countrymen Judas was introducing a custom alien from the habits and strange to the traditions of his own people.

In addition to this one passage, which, I believe, stands alone in the Apocryphal writings, there is some additional evidence of the Jewish belief and practice to be derived from Jewish services and commemorations for souls.

Canon Luckock, to whose interesting work, entitled 'After Death,' I am indebted for the principal facts in the history of this doctrine to which I shall refer, gives many extracts from these Jewish services, which are certainly sufficient to prove the extreme antiquity of the practice in question. Some of these commemorative services for the departed appear to have been in use from an early date; for example, in the service appointed to be said on the great Day of Atonement there are prayers for the dead, and one of these prayers is as follows: 'May God remember the soul of my father, my Lord, N., the son of M., who is gone to his everlasting home, because that I here offer a charity for him, for the reward of

this may his soul be bound up in the bundle of life together with the soul of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah, and with other saints, male and female, who are in Paradise.\* Certain inscriptions also have been discovered on Jewish tombs which are distinctly prayers for the dead, and although the age of these inscriptions is doubtful, they are sufficient evidence of the practice having obtained to a certain extent among the Jewish people. Here are two of these inscriptions, dating probably from the second or third century before Christ: 'May his rest be glory'; 'May the Spirit of the Lord lead him to rest!' On another tomb we read: 'The pious Mashta (may her rest be glory!), daughter of the aged, the pious, the humble, the good, the God-fearing David (may the Spirit of God lead him to rest!).'†

This evidence of the practice of the Jews is important, not only for its own sake, but because it affords a presumption that the practice of praying for the dead existed, at any rate in some parts of the Jewish Church, in the time of our Lord. When, however, it is argued, as it is by Canon Luckock, that we have 'no alternative but to interpret' our Lord's silence on the

\* Luckock, p. 58.

† *Ibid.*, p. 63.

subject but 'as a sign of the Divine acquiescence' in the practice, he is certainly going farther than the facts admit. For, in the first place, if we admit that the habit of praying for the dead existed in the time of Christ, there is no clear evidence of the practice having become widespread or universal among the Jews, and the silence of contemporaneous records, save in the solitary passage already quoted from the Book of the Maccabees, seems to be an indication that such prayers may have been exceptional rather than otherwise; and, secondly, it seems to me a precarious and perilous inference to assume that our Lord's silence must be construed as a tacit approval of all that He did not openly condemn. The utmost that can fairly be said is that there appears to be some evidence of the practice of praying for the dead, and that it seems probable the practice extended even down to the time of Christ.

2. When we come to the practice of the primitive Church we are on firmer ground, and the first evidence afforded of that practice is to be gathered from those most interesting monuments of early Christianity, the Catacombs of ancient Rome. Some of these catacombs may date back even to Apostolic times, indeed the earliest inscription yet discovered has been

assigned, on good evidence, to A.D. 71, but, I believe, no other inscription has yet been found belonging to the first century of the Christian era. There are two which have been identified as dating from the second century, twenty-three from the third, and about five hundred from the fourth, and five hundred from the fifth centuries, not to mention others whose date is uncertain.

We may accept, without hesitation, the testimony of the catacombs as giving us a simple and touching record of the faith and practice of the early Christian Church up to the close of the fifth century after Christ. Now, it is remarkable first of all that whilst some of these inscriptions undoubtedly do contain prayers of a certain kind for the dead, these prayers are confined to requests that the dead may continue in peace, or in light, or in refreshment, or live in Christ or in God, and next that none of them are certainly as old as the second century. Here is a specimen of the inscriptions which may be taken as illustrating this statement: 'Hilaris, may you live happily with your friends; may you be refreshed with the peace of God!' 'Timothea, mayest thou have eternal light in Christ!' 'Irenea, mayest thou live in God!' 'My



sweetest Chresima, my most loving daughter, mayest thou live in God !' 'Marius Vitellianus, to his most faithful wife Primitiva : Hail, innocent soul, dear wife, mayest thou live in Christ !'

There is no necessity further to multiply quotations, for there are sufficient proofs that at any rate in the fifth century the Church followed their dead with prayers, or at least desires, for their eternal welfare. I confess, however, that to build a serious argument on these inscriptions seems to me an exceedingly precarious undertaking, and for two reasons. In the first place, I am never quite sure when I read these inscriptions that they are really more than the expression of a natural and pious wish or hope for the eternal well-being of the departed ; and, secondly, even if these inscriptions do contain prayers for the dead, the larger number, if not the whole of them, date from a time when the purity of primitive Christian truth had begun to be corrupted by the admixture of tradition and error.

3. When we pass from the Catacombs to the early Christian Liturgies there is undoubted evidence that the practice of praying for the dead had become widespread in the Church. Thus the following petitions occur in the



Clementine Liturgy :\* ‘Remember, O Lord God, the spirits of all flesh, of whom we have made mention, and of whom we have not made mention, who are of the true faith, from righteous Abel until this day ; do Thou Thyself give them rest there in the land of the living in Thy Kingdom, in the delight of Paradise, in the bosom of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, our holy fathers ; whence pain and grief and lamentation have fled away ; there the light of Thy countenance looks upon them, and gives them light for evermore.’ And the Coptic Liturgy has the prayer :† ‘Be merciful, O Lord. Grant rest to our fathers and brothers who have fallen asleep, and whose souls Thou hast received. Remember also all the saints who have pleased Thee since the world began.’ And in the Syrian Liturgy we read :‡ ‘We commemorate all the faithful dead who have died in the true faith, . . . and come to Thee, O God, the Lord of spirits and of all flesh ; we ask, we intreat, we pray Christ our Lord, who took their souls and spirits to Himself, that by His own manifold compassions He will make them worthy of the pardon of their faults, and the remission of their sins.’

\* Luckock, p. 109.

† *Ibid.*, p. 111.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

These liturgical witnesses to prayer for the dead prove nothing, however, as to the belief and practice of the primitive Church, for not only is their text by no means absolutely certain, but it seems probable that they cannot be assigned to an earlier date than the third or fourth century after Christ; and there have been so many interpolations and additions to the original text, that it is impossible to quote them as any evidence of the faith and practice of the primitive Church. They may be evidence of the opinions and practice of the Church of the third, or fourth, or fifth centuries, but certainly of nothing more.

4. The testimony of the Fathers is the next point to be considered in our investigation, and I again repeat that I give this testimony, not as any authority for us to follow, but simply for its historic value as illustrating the faith and practice of the age to which it belongs.

The first Christian writer who refers to prayers for the dead is Tertullian (A.D. 220), but he speaks of the practice as having been long established in the Church.\*

The great Augustine (A.D. 373) says: 'It is come down to us from the Fathers, and is universally held in the Church, that we should

\* Luckock, p. 101.

pray for those who died in the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ when they are commemorated in their proper place in the sacrifice.' This last expression refers to the commemoration of the dead made at the Lord's Supper, a practice still retained by the Roman Catholic Church, whose Canon of the Mass contains the following prayer: 'Remember also, O Lord, thy servants of both sexes, N. and M., who are gone before us, with the sign of faith and repose in the sleep of peace.' Augustine's own practice is thus described in his 'Confessions,' and is quoted here from Canon Luckcock's work: 'After describing minutely his feelings at the burial of his mother, he gives the very words of the prayer which he offered in her behalf, after God had bound up the wounds of his broken heart: "I pour out unto Thee, our God, tears of a far different kind for Thy handmaid, . . . although she, having been quickened in Christ even before she was released from the burden of the flesh, had so lived that Thy name should be praised by her faith and conversation, yet I dare not say that since Thou didst regenerate her in baptism, no word fell from her lips in violation of Thy commandment: . . . I therefore, O God of my heart, my praise and my life, setting aside

for awhile her good deeds, for which I gladly give Thee thanks, do now entreat Thee for my mother's sins.'"

The testimony of other Fathers, such as Chrysostom and Epiphanius, might also be quoted as teaching the same doctrine; unfortunately, however, the value of this opinion of the Fathers is largely destroyed for those who are Protestants by the general sacerdotalism of their writings. If it be possible to quote the Fathers as teaching the lawfulness of prayers for the dead, it is equally possible to quote them as teaching the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, of priestly absolution, of the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist—indeed, of most of the distinctive doctrines of the Roman Church. The value of the opinion of the Fathers is historical rather than doctrinal; and even their unanimous consent to any doctrine is no warrant that the doctrine in question is warranted by the teaching of Scripture.

It is not necessary to pursue this historical inquiry farther than to say the Churches of Rome and the Eastern Church still retain prayers for the departed in their services, but the Protestant Churches—with the doubtful exception of the Church of England—have

altogether dropped it from their doctrine and practice. I say with the doubtful exception of the Church of England, because there is one prayer in the Book of Common Prayer that is quoted as being a prayer for the dead by those who uphold the practice in the Anglican Church. In the Office for the Burial of the Dead prayer is offered 'that it may please Thee of Thy great goodness shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect, and to hasten Thy kingdom that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of Thy Holy Name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul in Thy eternal and everlasting glory.' But here again, I think, the inference that this is really a prayer for the dead is too doubtful and precarious to be of any argumentative value.

At the same time, individual members of the English Church have been undoubtedly in the habit of remembering the dead in their prayers. Jeremy Taylor, Bishop Andrewes, Bishop Cosin, Isaac Barrow, who was said to be 'mighty for it;' Thorndike, whose epitaph, written by himself, concludes with these words — 'Do thou, reader, pray for rest and a happy resurrection in Christ for Herbert Thorndike';

Bishop Ken, the author of the Evening Hymn, Reginald Heber, the author of 'From Greenland's icy mountains,' Dr. Johnson, Dr. Routh, John Keble, the late Dean of Wells, may all be quoted as having adopted the practice of praying for the dead.

Outside of the English Church I can only recall one eminent name in support of this practice. John Wesley maintained the lawfulness of prayer for the dead, on the ground of the earliest Christian antiquity, and the teaching of the Church of England. It is curious, however, to note that in the articles of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America we find 'praying for the dead' condemned as 'man's tradition, vainly invented, and in violation of the express warnings of Almighty God to the careless and unconverted.' The Puritans—as a whole—condemned the practice, and the only exception I can find to what may be called the Protestant condemnation of the practice—and it is a very remarkable exception—is in the 76th article, drawn up by Zwingli in 1523, in which the following words occur (Article 60)—'If any man anxious about the dead implores or beseeches mercy for them from God, I do not condemn him.' But this stands alone. The hatred of Popish supersti-



tion, which was felt, and righteously felt, by the Puritan party in England, destroyed all belief in the lawfulness of the practice of praying for the dead from the Protestant Churches of England and of America.

To sum up as fairly as I can the evidence thus far presented, there is some indication that a portion of the Jewish Church before the time of Christ were in the habit of praying for the dead. There is little or none that the primitive Church followed this practice, as the instances of such prayers date, for the most part, from a time when the simplicity of the Christian Gospel had begun to be corrupted by some of the characteristic errors and superstitions of the Roman Church.

5. The question, however, still remains to be considered—and it is the most important question in this inquiry—does Scripture lend any sanction to the practice, or does it forbid and deny it?

So far as I know, there is only one verse in the whole compass of the Bible that has been quoted as supporting the doctrine of the legitimacy of praying for the dead. In the Second Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy we read (i. 16): ‘The Lord grant unto him to find mercy of the Lord in that day’; and it is said



these words undoubtedly prove, or, at any rate, irresistibly suggest, that Onesiphorus was dead, and, accordingly, are a prayer for the dead. I confess, after the most patient study of the whole passage, I am totally unable to see anything more than an extraordinary and most unwarranted assumption in this reasoning. First of all, there is no kind of proof that Onesiphorus was dead; and next, if he were dead, the words certainly do not necessarily amount to more than a pious wish that Onesiphorus might be found at the great day among the company of the saved, just such a wish as is often expressed when we say of one who has been called away by death, ‘We hope all is well with him!’

It is true that there is another passage in the New Testament which has been adduced by some advocates of prayer for the dead as bearing on the practice. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and the fifteenth chapter, we read (verse 20), ‘Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead?’ Now, whatever these words may mean, whether, as the late learned Dr. Döllinger supposes, there is a reference in them to the practice that obtained in the early Church of a surviving relative submitting to baptism on behalf of some deceased

relative who had shown an intention of being baptized, but had been unable to fulfil the intention—an interpretation adopted by the late Dean Stanley—there is assuredly nothing in the passage about praying for the dead.

Scripture, then, is absolutely and entirely silent on the subject, but this silence, it has been contended, is not necessarily the silence of condemnation. Certainly, if it could be shown that the Jewish Church universally practised this habit—and this has not been proved—then I think it might be urged, with some fairness, that just as the New Testament makes no explicit reference to infant baptism, because from the first it presupposed the inclusion of the children of believers in the Covenant of God, so it makes no reference to praying for the dead because of the universal acceptance of the practice.

This, however, cannot be said; and the silence of Scripture, I think, in fairness, ought to be regarded as affording a considerable and weighty presumption against the doctrine. At the same time, if anyone felt drawn to beseech God to bless the dead who had departed this life in the faith of Christ, or to grant to some dear child, who had been called away from earth before the possession of the fulness of

moral responsibility, the grace of Christ, I think I should be inclined to say, in the words of Zwingli already quoted, 'If any man, anxious about the dead, implores or beseeches mercy for them from God, I do not condemn him.' In Charles Kingsley's novel, 'Two Years Ago,' Grace Hervey, the sweet and saintly schoolmistress of the parish by the sea, referring to some poor men whose bodies had been cast on the shore during a terrible storm in the night, says: 'Strange, is it not, that it was a duty to pray for all those poor things last night, and a sin to pray for them this morning?' I suppose Kingsley intended by this strenuous way of putting the truth to let us see what was his own view of the lawfulness of such prayers for the dead; and certainly there is no one who has realized the awfulness and greatness of the power of prayer, and who has agonized in secret with God for the conversion of another soul very dear to him, or has besought God for the fulness of His blessing to descend on some heart only partially given to the Lord, who has not sometimes felt the longing to follow that soul even into the eternal world with the prayers which have encompassed it on earth. There are, moreover, a great number who have died, and who

have never made what Dante calls 'the great refusal' of Christ during this life—little children, poor idiots and lunatics, men and women, who have lived and died in 'invincible ignorance' of the claims and authority and love of Christ, but who have left behind some human hearts who loved them ; and I, for one, should not dare to blame these sorrowing hearts if they ventured to cross the gulf of death with their prayers, and to surround the dead with the incense of intercession before the throne of Almighty God.

If these prayers of pious souls in secret for those who have passed into the eternal world were all that was really meant by prayers for the dead as now revived and taught in many of the churches in this land, I imagine there are few, if any of us, who would care to dispute their lawfulness or to blame those who practised them. It is not so, however. Prayers for the dead, as taught and practised by a certain section of the Anglican clergy, are really part of the great Catholic and sacerdotal revival that is rapidly revolutionizing the Church of England. They are accompanied by the solemn celebration of the Eucharist with a ceremonial purposely made to resemble as nearly as possible that of the Church of Rome ; they are dependent for their

efficacy not merely on the devout and clinging love of the survivors of the dead, and on those words of intercession which are only whispered into the ear of God, but on the presence of the priest who offers up the bloodless oblation, and who has sacerdotal functions and sacerdotal power. They are, in short, Roman doctrine and Roman practice introduced into the Protestant Church of England, and it is time, I think, for every man who loves his country much and loves the truth of God more to protest against this revival of mediæval superstition in our midst. The patience of the English people is large and tolerant, but it may be overpassed at last, and it is more than possible that the men — conscientious and earnest as we may hope and believe they are — who are doing the work of Rome in the English Church may provoke a reaction and a retribution which will endanger other things than the vestments of the priest or his position at the altar. The spirit of the Puritans, if it sometimes seem to sleep, is not dead, and may be roused to a sudden and stern conflict, in which once again it will contend even unto death for the ‘truth as it is in Jesus.’ This is no question of religious liberty. Rome has the right to build her churches and to appoint her

bishops and priests, and to institute her services wherever she desires in this land, and there is no one who would wish to hinder her by the arm of the civil power, so long as she respects and preserves the freedom of others to worship God as their consciences dictate; but the question that is rapidly nearing us, growing more serious and urgent every day, is whether there is any place in the English Church for men who are in everything but name Roman ecclesiastics, and who teach and preach all the most characteristic doctrines of the Church of Rome. The history of the centuries which have gone by, the genius and faith of the British people, the illustrious memories of saints and martyrs who have died for God, are enough to assure us that the greatness of England and some of its most precious liberties are involved in the maintenance of its Protestant faith.

But to return.

6. Whatever judgment we may form on the lawfulness, or otherwise, of prayer for the dead who have not died in wilful unbelief, is a matter of comparatively small importance when compared with the responsibility that rests on all Christians to pray for the living. Have any of us yet fully realized the wonder and the



power of intercessory prayer? One word—one little word—of prayer—how light a thing it seems!—and yet that one word has passed from earth to heaven, it has knocked at the gates of the City of God, and has found instant admission there; its voice is heard above the song of Cherubim and Seraphim; it cleaves its way through all the shining throng that surrounds the eternal throne; it reaches the heart of God Himself; it ‘moves the arm that moves the world.’ O wonder and mystery of prayer! O power with God—power over God to prevail—how is it that in our unbelief we use so seldom this mighty power that God Himself has placed in our hands? God grant that each one of us may know the blessedness of intercessory prayer, and that when we are conscious of the sin and need of our fellow-men, we may say, in the words of Moses, the man of God, ‘As for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.’



## IX.

### ITS APPROACHING CLOSE : THE MILLENNIUM AND THE GREAT APOSTASY.

IN attempting to discover the real meaning of the teaching of Holy Scripture on the 'last things,' we shall have to encounter some of the most difficult and intricate problems connected with the interpretation of the Bible; we shall be entering a region where there is comparatively little light to guide us, where it is difficult to know when we are standing on the solid ground of fact, and not on the quicksands of imagery and metaphor, where it is easy to go astray, and in which above all things else we should seek not only piety as a guide, but a large and sober learning familiar with the great principles which ought to underlie the scientific interpretation of symbolical writings generally.

I. There are many earnest and devout students of Scripture who hold what is techni-

cally called the pre-millennial advent of our Lord; that is, they believe that Scripture teaches the second coming of Christ will precede, instead of following, the thousand years of blessedness popularly known as the millennium. There are great varieties and differences of detail in the views of the pre-millennial school, but speaking broadly and generally, I think the following may be taken as giving a tolerably accurate account of their teaching.

They believe, as has just been stated, that the second advent of Christ will come before the millennium. At this second advent (which, according to some, will be a secret and invisible advent) the dead in Christ will first rise, and with all the living saints will be 'caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air,' after which they will again descend with Christ and reign with Him a thousand years on the earth. The earth itself will be wholly changed, and, according to some interpreters in this school, there will then take place the conversion first of the Gentile, and next of the Jewish nations to Christ, the conversion of the Jews being followed by their restoration to their own land. Jerusalem will once more become the city of the great King, for Christ will personally reign there, holding visible

court as the King of men, His Jewish subjects standing nearest to His throne. In Jerusalem, moreover, the temple will be rebuilt, and the whole of the ancient Mosaic economy of sacrifice, and the entire Jewish ritual, will be restored; these sacrifices—so it is ingeniously said—having now a retrospective reference to the Cross of Christ, just as before His advent they had a prospective and prophetic reference to it. At the close of the thousand years during which Christ has reigned personally on the earth, Satan will be loosed, and there will be a widespread revolt against the throne of God, terminated at last by Christ's third advent in glory in the clouds of heaven, which will be followed first by the general resurrection of the dead who had no part in the 'first resurrection,' and then by the final judgment on all the nations of the earth.

It would be manifestly impossible within the limits of this paper adequately to discuss all the questions which are raised in this pre-millennial view of the advent of our Lord; but as it is often pressed on young and earnest Christians as being the only view of the truth that is consistent with the teaching of Holy Scripture, and as some who hold it occasionally assume an air of spiritual superiority

over those who deny it, it may be desirable very briefly to indicate the grave, and in my judgment fatal objections which lie against the whole scheme from beginning to end.

(1) In the first place it teaches that Christ at His second coming will introduce the millennium, and will reign upon the earth. Now there is not one single clear and unmistakable passage in the New Testament that lends any kind of support to this view. There is not one solitary passage anywhere that declares Christ's second coming will be *followed* by the conversion of the world, and by His personal reign upon the earth.

(2) Secondly, this doctrine involves the extraordinary assumption of a third, and according to some of its adherents, of a fourth coming of Christ. The second advent of Christ precedes the millennium; His third advent follows it; but where in all Scripture is this doctrine to be found? 'To them that wait for Him,' we are told, Christ 'shall appear a second time, apart from sin, unto salvation;' and He Himself in the solemn discourse recorded in Matt. xxv. 31-33, expressly declares that when He comes in 'His glory,' it will be for the final judgment of 'all the nations.'

(3) Again, this pre-millennial doctrine teaches

us that there will be two separate resurrections, the first of the saints—some pre-millennarians further limit the number by confining it to saints who have been immersed—at the coming of Christ, and the second of the rest of the dead at the last day. Whatever support this doctrine may seem to derive from a superficial view of certain passages in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians\* and in the Book of the Revelation,† the general teaching of the New Testament is clear enough that there will be only one general resurrection at the last day, both ‘of the just and the unjust.’ Our Lord Himself declares, ‘All that are in the tombs shall hear His voice and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment.’‡

(4) And lastly, the whole of this pre-millennial scheme is tainted with Judaism from beginning to end. It is the survival in the Church of many of the distinctive hopes of the Jews who crucified Christ because He disappointed their hopes and refused to become a King in a carnal and worldly kingdom. An earthly court and an earthly throne, a visible monarchy in Jeru-

\* 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.

† Rev. xx. 4-6.

‡ John v. 28, 29.

saalem, the Jewish ritual re-established, enemies literally destroyed as armies now destroy their foes in battle, friends rewarded by high places at court, and by visible thrones and dignities—what is all this but the carnalizing of Christianity and the degradation of its pure and lofty spiritual teaching into a Jewish kingdom over again? I know that amongst the adherents of the pre-millennarian view are many men and women of holy and self-denying lives, whom all Christians would delight to honour for their own sake and for their Master's; but I confess I have never yet been able to understand how anyone who has ever had any vision, howsoever dim and distant, of the glory of Christ, who has ever felt the majesty of that unseen and spiritual kingdom that 'cometh not with observation,' of which Jesus is the King, who has ever beheld Him exalted to be 'a Prince and a Saviour,' could seriously believe and teach such a view of Christ's kingdom as is involved in this pre-millennarian scheme. The words of Richard Baxter, the author of the 'Saints' Rest,' are not one whit too strong on the palpable absurdities and impossibilities of this view. 'Let any sober man judge,' Baxter says in his 'Glorious Kingdom' (pp. 40, 41), 'whether this one only mention of a thousand



years in a hard prophecy will warrant a man to preach a new Gospel and a new kingdom of Christ to the world, without any proof from all the plain words of Christ Himself and His Apostles, and directly against them. He that well considereth prophetic language will think that articles of faith should be founded on plainer words.'

II. Let us now endeavour to ascertain what is the teaching of Scripture concerning the millennium, especially in relation to the second advent. Many devout and learned expositors of Scripture hold that the millennium is already past; or if not past, that we are now living in it. The late learned Master of the Temple thinks that the binding of Satan referred to in Rev. xx. 2, took place at the Incarnation of Christ, and that the so-called millennium then commenced. I do not, however, think this view has obtained many adherents, for the great majority of expositors are agreed that the celebrated passage in which reference is made to the 'thousand years' is a picture—howsoever difficult of interpretation—of the last things.

Assuming this, there are a few points which seem to me clearly and distinctly to be taught us in this chapter.



1. Satan, we are told, at some future period of the history of the Church and of the world, will be 'bound.' The symbol occurs again and again in the New Testament, and always indicates a restriction of liberty, a fettering of power, the cessation—to a large degree—of previous activity. The symbol, as used in the Book of Revelation, seems therefore clearly to indicate that we may joyfully look forward to the diminution of the power of Satan, to a breaking, so to speak, of the hold he has too long had on the hearts and lives of men.

There is not a word said to lead to the conclusion that in this so-called millennium there will be no sin, for even if the binding of Satan implied the complete cessation of his power (and we shall see in a moment it does not), the evil heart of man is still left behind, and so long as it exists, sin will exist also. Even the activity of Satan during this period of comparative restriction may not be wholly checked, for there are terms in other parts of Scripture quite as strong as those used in the Book of the Revelation, and yet they cannot imply the total restriction of the power of the devil. (Cf. 2 Peter ii. 4; Jude 6; Luke x. 18; Rev. xii. 7.) At the same time I think the symbol of the binding of Satan may fairly be taken to mean

some fettering and restriction of the forces of evil on the earth, some lessening of the temptations to sin, some general amelioration of the moral and spiritual condition of mankind. Possibly we may find some hints and presages of this time in the gradual spread of education, in the improvements of civilization, in the triumphs of science, in the elevation of the lot of the poor and the outcast, in the slow reduction of the sum of human poverty and misery, in the lengthening of human life, in the greater horror of war that is felt by all nations, in the new solidarity of mankind that is so widely felt; above all, in the slow but sure evangelization of the world by the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Further, Scripture seems to teach us there will be a considerable and wide-spread conversion of the Gentile and heathen nations of the world previous to the second advent of Christ. It is difficult to decide on the extent of this conversion. I doubt whether Scripture as a whole warrants us in believing in the conversion of the entire world to Christ, but that 'the Gospel must first be preached in all nations' before 'the end come,'\* that as the result of this preaching there will be more

\* Mark xiii. 10.

illustrious triumphs of its power than any we have yet seen, that 'a nation' may literally 'be born in a day,' that the 'fulness of the Gentiles' shall 'come in,' that 'all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord,' that Christ shall 'have dominion from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth,' that His 'saving health shall be made known among all nations,' and that the 'earth shall yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him;' that 'in the name' of Jesus 'every knee shall bow' and 'every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father,' that, in a word, this long lost and sinful world shall in some true and noble sense become the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ, I do not for one moment doubt.

With this wide-spread conversion of the Gentile nations will also come the national conversion of the Jews. The veil will be taken away from their eyes when they turn to the Lord, for it is only for a time that 'the hardening in part has befallen Israel.' When 'the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in,' 'all Israel shall be saved,' and Christ's own words

be fulfilled, 'there shall be one flock and one Shepherd.' With this conversion of Israel will come their restoration to their own land. No longer shall they be the only nation in the world without a land of their own, no longer shall the ancient curse of being scattered, 'sifted as wheat,' among all nations, hang over them, blighting all their national life, for the land given to 'Abraham and his seed for ever' shall at length be restored to the children of Abraham, and the word of the promise be fulfilled, 'Ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and ye shall be My people and I will be your God.'\* I do not wonder that as this glorious vision of the national regeneration of Israel rose before St. Paul he exclaimed in an ecstasy of wonder and of joy, 'If the casting away of Israel be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead.'†

How long this era of blessedness and peace will last we are not told, save in the symbolical number of 1,000 years. This number is used more than twenty times in the Book of the Revelation, but not once in its literal meaning, and it is, therefore, altogether against the usage

\* Ezek. xxxvi. 28.

† Rom. xi. 15.

and genius of Hebrew apocalyptic literature to interpret it literally in the passage before us. It is really one of the ordinary Jewish metaphors to describe an indefinite and extended time, and all we can safely conclude is that the period of the partial paralysis and restriction of Satan's power for evil will be long and extended. Whether after 6,000 years of sin and sorrow this earth is to have a Sabbatic rest of 1,000 years of comparative freedom, the seventh great day in her week of ages, as has been seriously maintained by some expositors, may be doubted; for all that seems certainly revealed, not only here, but also in other and concordant Scriptures, is that the millennial period has yet to come, and when it comes it will be the first great sign that the Intermediate State is nearing its end.

3. At the close of the millennial age the prophetic record tells us of a new and furious outbreak of the powers of evil against the Kingdom of Christ. (Rev. xx. 7-9.)

I have already said that it is very doubtful if Scripture ever teaches the universal conversion of the world under the Gospel dispensation. However glowing may be the terms it uses in speaking of the millennial blessedness, these

terms must be construed with great reserve and under the limitations imposed by other Scriptures. Thus, for example, we are told that the heathen nations in 'the four corners of the earth,' described as Gog and Magog, in numbers 'as the sand of the sea,' at the close of the thousand years are deceived by Satan, and gather together in one final assault on the Throne of Christ. No one can believe that these innumerable assailants of the reign of Christ were all once His servants and His disciples, and we may assume, therefore, they represent those who were still unsaved in the dark places of the earth. In the last age of the history of the Church, when she is almost in sight of the eternal glory, when the triumph of the Gospel seemed almost assured, there arises the last and most terrible outbreak of the powers of evil on the earth.

How wonderful is the calm and triumphant courage [of Scripture, thus to darken its own pictures of the glory of Christ's Kingdom with the shadow of awful revolt! Just as in the life of Christ the end of His ministry was the signal for the last outburst of malice and sin, so will it be in the life of His Church. As the end of her life on earth draws near, Hell will



again gather together all its infernal forces for one last attack on the Throne of Christ. There are dark and mysterious words in St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Thessalonians\* which seem to refer to this same vast revolt, this last great apostasy of earth, and which shall be the sounding of the great tongue of time that the end draws near, that the King is at hand, and that judgment is nigh, when 'the great white throne' shall be set, and the Judge shall sit upon it, from whose Face, in the majestic words of Scripture, 'the earth and the heaven fled away.'

When this shall be no man knoweth, for of that day and that hour, Jesus said, 'knoweth no man, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only;' and I cannot close this chapter with better words than those of Bishop Hall, once the Bishop of Norwich. 'O blessed Saviour!' writes the Bishop,† 'how busy are the tongues of men, how are their brains taken up with the indeterminable construction of enigmatical truth, when in the meantime the care of Thy spiritual reign in their hearts is neglected! Oh, my Saviour!

\* Chap. ii. 1-4, 6-8.

† 'Breathings of the Devout Soul.'



while others weary themselves with the disquisition of Thy personal reign on earth for a thousand years, let it be the whole bent and study of my soul to make sure of my personal reign with Thee in heaven to all eternity.'

## X.

### THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.

THE second coming of Christ will close the Intermediate State with the Resurrection of the Body, and will usher in the final judgment, which will issue in 'eternal life' or 'eternal punishment.'

In speaking, however, of the 'second coming' of Christ, it is necessary to define clearly what we mean by the term. There is a sense in which it is true that Christ has never left this earth, and cannot therefore 'come again,' as if He were revisiting a world He had for a time deserted. His own promise to His disciples was, 'Lo! I am with you always even unto the end,' and that promise has never been broken. He told His disciples in the last and most tender words He spoke to them before His death, 'I will not leave you desolate. I come' (not as the Authorized Version has it, 'I will

come') 'to you,' and the history both of the world and of the Church and of the individual Christian has been one long interpretation and fulfilment of this perpetual coming of Christ. Christ came, in a real and true sense, at the destruction of Jerusalem; He came in the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity, and in the new order and the new civilization which were then born in Europe; He came in each upbreking of the light during the long night of the dark ages; He came at the Reformation, He is ever coming in each of those great critical epochs which stand out as landmarks in the long and varied history of the Church and the world. And as with the history of nations or the history of the Church, so is it with the individual soul. Christ is always coming to each one of us. In conversion, when He renews the heart and bestows forgiveness of sins and eternal life on the once dead soul; in the providential turning-points of daily life, in all its joys and its sorrows, in each spiritual crisis through which we pass; in the solemn hour of death when He calls us home; in these greater moments of life He fulfils the words of His own promise, 'I come unto you.'

All this is true; but it is also true that these

constant and successive comings of our Lord do not exhaust what that Scripture means, or what Christ Himself means by His 'second coming.' Throughout the whole of the New Testament two comings stand out, towering above all other advents of Christ, the first when He came 'in great humility' at the Incarnation in Bethlehem; the second when 'in power and great glory' He shall descend from Heaven, and shall 'appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for Him, unto salvation.'\*

It is this final advent I propose to consider in the present paper.

I. We have already noticed some of the chief events which will precede and announce the second advent of our Lord.

The Millennium will have passed; 'the Gospel of the Kingdom' will have been 'preached in the whole world for a testimony unto the nations';† 'the times of the Gentiles' will be 'fulfilled';‡ 'the fulness of the Gentiles' will have 'come in' and 'all Israel' will 'be saved,'§ their national conversion being followed, as the Word of God abundantly testifies, by their restoration as a people to their own land.

\* Heb. ix. 28.

† Matt. xxiv. 14.

‡ Luke xxi. 24.

§ Rom. xi. 25.

Following this period of blessedness, the length of which is left wholly undetermined by Holy Scripture, there will come a time of great trial to the Church, a reverse of her fortunes, a falling away or an 'apostasy,' as it is called,\* accompanied by a wide-spread revolt against the Throne of God. This period of rebellion and apostasy is described in the Book of the Revelation as a 'loosing of Satan,' who had been 'bound,'† and in the second epistle to the Thessalonians, it also appears to be spoken of as the revelation of Antichrist, 'the man of sin, the son of perdition.'‡ Our Lord Himself, in the great discourse which He delivered on the last things—a discourse which, like the prophecies of the Old Testament, seems to have had a double reference, one nearer which was fulfilled at Christ's coming at the destruction of Jerusalem, and another, more remote, to be fulfilled at His second advent—not obscurely intimated that before His final advent there will be wide-spread spiritual revolt against His authority and power. (*Cf.* Matt. xxiv. 24; Mark xiii. 19; Luke xxi. 25.)

How these words of Christ will be fulfilled we cannot tell, but he who knows what man is,

\* 2 Thess. ii. 3.

† Rev. xx. 2, 3.

‡ 2 Thess. ii. 3.

and knows the fickleness and wickedness of the human heart and how easily, as in the French revolution at the close of the last century, a wave of anti-Christian feeling may sweep over a nation, and how the world still hates Christ, will find no difficulty in believing in the possibility of such a fearful spiritual declension and rebellion as that here referred to. Whether it will come in a flood of immorality and vice like that which overwhelmed the Roman Empire of old, or in a desolating blast of unbelief and atheistic materialism, calling itself perhaps by the name of philosophy or science, or in an uprising of communism and socialism and nihilism overturning the foundations of civilization and society, or in a subtle and wide-spread apostasy within the Church itself, delusion and superstition and error sheltering themselves behind the Bible and the Church, and 'deceiving, if possible, the very elect,' or in all of these combined, no one can presume to say. All that seems certain is that it will be a time of terrible sorrow, of fierce temptation, of overwhelming disaster, when the faith of the Church will be tried to the uttermost, when there will be separations and divisions in households, and many apostasies from Christ, and that this time of the apparent triumph of Satan will

precede his final overthrow and the destruction of his kingdom at the second advent of Christ. Just as the hour of greatest darkness often comes before the dawn, so on the midnight sky shall flash 'the sign of the Son of Man,' and 'they shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory.'\*

Christ will have come the second time.

II. It remains for us to consider more particularly the nature of this second advent of our Lord.

I. It will be personal. Many of Christ's comings in the past had been impersonal, and had been accomplished by secondary agents. Christ has come, as we have seen, in the voice of conscience, in the thunders of war, in the blessings of peace, in the improvements of civilization, in the authority and penalties of law, even in the forces of nature, for 'fire and hail and stormy wind' fulfil 'His word,' but not thus will He come in the day of His great glory. It will be a personal appearance of the living Lord, which all the earth shall then behold. As the forces of evil had been represented in the appearance of a personal Antichrist, so the forces of righteousness will be

\* Matt. xxiv. 29, 30.



manifested in the revelation and glory of a Person, 'the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.' 'Every eye shall see HIM, and they which pierced Him, and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over Him.'\*

It is a great hope to anticipate the time when righteousness shall reign on earth, when peace shall over all the earth

'Her golden splendours fling,'

when truth shall be the light of every human life, and the law of goodness shall reign in the conscience of man ; but it is a greater hope to look forward to the advent of the Lord of righteousness and truth, to 'wait for the Saviour from Heaven'; to know that He will come in 'the glory of His might' to be 'glorified in His saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believe.'†

2. It will be unexpected. Again and again our Lord teaches us this truth. He will come, so He said, as 'a thief in the night,' as the flood came in the days of Noah,‡ as the lighting 'cometh out of the East and shineth even unto the West,§ at midnight,' when both wise and foolish are wrapped in sleep.|| The one

\* Rev. i. 7.

† 2 Thess. i. 10.

‡ Matt. xxiv. 38.

§ Luke xvii. 24.

|| Matt. xxv. 6.

note that constantly recurs in our Lord's teaching concerning His second advent is its unexpectedness. 'In such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.'\*

It is because of the suddenness and unexpectedness of His advent that Christ so often warns us to be prepared for it. Let us be careful, however, not to mistake the nature of a true preparation for Christ's second coming.

If we read Christ's solemn words of warning we shall see what He regards as true readiness for His coming. It is not foolish and idle curiosity as to the secrets of the unopened future, it is not an attitude of unnatural and feverish expectancy, it is not skill in reading the signs of the times, the newspaper in one hand and the Bible in the other, it is not even the straining gaze of the servant who is eager to catch the first signs of His advent—it is none of these things which Christ declares constitutes readiness to meet Him. 'Who then is the faithful and wise servant?' He asks, and He tells us it is the servant whom 'his Lord hath set over His household to give them their food in due season;' and then He adds: 'Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing.'†

\* Matt. xxiv. 44.

† Matt. xxiv. 45, 46.

‘Faithful and wise servant.’ It is he and he alone whom Christ pronounces ‘blessed,’ and I for one would rather be the servant so busy in preparing the house to receive the Master when He comes, so anxious that He shall find every room ready for Him to occupy, and all His great household fed, that he has no time to look out of the windows to see if his Lord be drawing near, than I would be the servant who, in his eager anxiety so to catch the first glimpse of His advent, has no heart nor time for the homely work his Lord had given him to discharge in his household. Faithfulness is more than expectancy, and obedience is more precious to Christ than anticipation of His advent.

3. Once again, Christ’s second advent will be an advent visible to all. The living and the dead will alike behold Him; ‘every eye shall see Him.’

At one and the same moment of time—it we can call that time which is its end—every human soul, young and old, ignorant and wise, bad and good, they who have lived and died so long ago as almost to have forgotten what this earth was like, and they who died but yesterday, with all who are ‘alive and remain,’ will behold their Saviour and King and Judge.

It is well, perhaps, to pause here and to ask how this great vision will affect ourselves. There are some who are now reading these words who will go forth to meet their Lord with joy, with a joy so rapturous as only to be described as a 'joy unspeakable and full of glory.' They have loved His name on earth, they have delighted in His dear service, they have often spoken to Him by the way, and they will be able to say with Mr. Standfast in the 'Pilgrim's Progress': 'I am going now to see that Head that was crowned with thorns, and that Face that was spit upon for me. I have formerly lived by hearsay and faith; but now I shall live by sight, and shall be with Him in whose company I delight myself. I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of on earth, and wherever I have seen the print of His shoe on the earth there I have coveted to set my foot too. His name has been to me as a civet box; yea, sweeter than all perfumes. His voice has been to me most sweet, and His countenance I have more desired than they that have most desired the light of the sun. His words did I use to gather for my food and for antidotes against my faintings. He has held me and has kept me from mine iniquities; yea! my steps hath He strengthened in His

way.' No longer will Christ be to them an unseen Lord whom they have loved. They behold His glory, and they too are 'manifested with Him in glory.'

There will be others, alas ! to whom Christ's second coming will be an awful and overwhelming sorrow. 'They shall wail because of Him' Whom they have neglected and despised, Whose love in vain pleaded with them, Whose mercy they refused, Whose glory and Whose Person they denied, and Whose authority they rejected. One awful word of Scripture alone describes their piteous and tremendous woe: 'They shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might.'\*

4. Finally, Christ's second coming will be a glorious appearance. We naturally associate the thought of light with that of glory, and there are not wanting indications in Scripture that at the second advent of Christ there will be an overpowering and dazzling effulgence of light. If even Plato could speak of light as the shadow of God, a Christian much more may associate the Eternal Light with the Eternal Love.

But how shall human words fitly speak of

\* 2 Thess. i. 9.

the glory of Christ which shall then be revealed? Only they who are His 'own,' who now catch some distant glimpses of the glory of His face, who worship His name, who behold Him already crowned 'King of kings and Lord of lords,' who watch with ever deepening joy the growing majesty of His Kingdom, who stand sometimes in the light of His presence—may tell in some imperfect way what 'the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ' will be like.

It is enough to say it will be the final revelation of God. He will come in 'the glory' He had 'with the Father before the foundation of the world,' and amid the splendours and royalties of this high advent, His people shall 'see the King in His beauty,' and that land which Isaiah exquisitely calls 'the land of farnesses.'\*

'The King on their enamoured eyes  
In all His beauty will arise,  
And make the people of His grace  
Glad with the glory of His face.

'Still will He grant them the delight  
Of that eternal vision bright,  
And still their mounting bliss advance  
With beamings from His countenance.

'A glory from His face doth stream,  
Beneath the splendour they shall gleam,  
And gazing on for evermore  
Glow with the beauty they adore.'

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\* Isaiah xxxiii. 17.



Accompanying the second advent will be the destruction, or, at any rate, the dissolution of the present material universe. The greatest event in the history of the universe, the coming of the Son of God in the glory of His eternal kingdom, will be accompanied by an awful and overwhelming convulsion and catastrophe in nature. 'The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.'\* Nor is it the voice of Scripture alone that predicts the final catastrophe in the physical universe. A voice comes to us from science itself, warning us that an end is surely, if slowly, coming to the glory of earth and sky, of sea and star. 'The earth,' we are told by the authors of the 'Unseen Universe,' 'will gradually lose its energy . . . the sun himself will wax dim and become useless . . . the whole visible universe will become a lifeless mass, *if, indeed, it be not doomed to utter dissolution.*' 'It is certain that there will be mighty catastrophes due to the crashing together of defunct suns, the smashing of the greater part of each into nebulous dust, which will form an intensely-heated nucleus.'†

\* 2 Pet. iii. 10. † 'Unseen Universe,' pp. 126, 128.



This destruction of the universe will, however, be succeeded by its reconstruction in nobler and fairer glory. This earth is beautiful and wonderful, and there are no words which can fully tell the glory of the heavens; but 'the new heavens' and 'the new earth' will as far exceed this present material universe in glory and loveliness as the glory of the noon outshines the wonder and glory of the dawn.

III. On the place the second advent of Christ ought to have in the life and thought and faith of the Church it is perhaps necessary to say one word. It is emphatically called in Scripture 'the blessed hope' of the Church, and it is indissolubly linked with the first advent as its completion and crown. The Lord's Supper is more than a memorial feast pointing backwards to the cross; it is a prophecy of the future as well. 'As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show the Lord's death till He come.'

How warm a place this hope had in the faith and hope of the early Church no reader of the New Testament can for one moment doubt. It may be the first disciples were wrong in some of the thoughts they associated with Christ's second coming, that they made the not unnatural mistake of expecting it to take

place in their own lifetime, that they had no conception of the long and weary ages of sin and sorrow which were to pass by ere their Lord returned ; but in this, at least, they were not mistaken—in cherishing the thought and hope of that return as the most precious joy in their faith and life.

How is it with the Church to-day ? I am afraid this ‘blessed hope’ has faded away—not, perhaps, entirely, but far too largely—from the heart of the Church. Instead of its occupying, as it once did, the foremost place in the faith of the Church, and being the crown of all its hope, it has so far receded from view that we have been told recently, and that, too, in a sermon by a Christian preacher, that the coming of Christ which ‘most concerns us is not at the end of history, but in the course of it.’

No doubt there are reasons which, to a large extent, may explain and account for the loss of this great hope. The exaggeration and puerilities which are sometimes associated with the expectation of Christ’s second coming, and which have occasioned a reaction in robust and vigorous minds against the doctrine ; the deeper interest taken by the Church of to-day in the amelioration of the present life, and

which has lessened its interest in the life to come; and perhaps, more than all, the unscriptural views as to the state after death which are held by many Christians, the loss of the doctrine of the Intermediate State, the belief that all is ended at death, that the righteous go to heaven and the wicked to hell, a belief that reduces the solemnities of the last judgment to an unreality, whereas in the New Testament the resurrection of the body and the final awards of judgment are always associated with the second advent of Christ—these things may perhaps account for the gradual decay of this hope of glory from the faith of the Church, but none the less is the Church the poorer and weaker for the loss, and one of the most pressing needs of the theology of the present day, as it seems to me, is the restoration to the proper place in its creed of this ancient and blessed hope.

Is it possible anyone who truly loves Christ can think of His coronation and enthronement, of His visible appearing in glory, of seeing Him face to face, without being moved to his heart by the thought?

As Richard Baxter quaintly and sweetly says in his 'Saint's Rest': 'Dost thou so long to have Christ come to thy soul with comfort and

life, and takest thyself but for a forlorn orphan while He seemeth absent, and dost thou not much more long for that coming which shall perfect thy life and joy and glory? Dost thou so rejoice after some short and tender enjoyment of Him in thy heart? Oh, how wilt thou then rejoice! . . . If thou have but a dear friend returned that hath been far and long absent, how do all run out to meet him with joy. "Oh," saith the child, "my father is come!" Saith the wife: "My husband is come!" and shall not we, when we behold our Lord in His majesty returning, cry out: "He is come, He is come!"?

Nor is it our Lord alone who will be glorified in this 'great day of the Lord.' It is the amazing revelation of Scripture that His people will then share with Him His own glory. Body, soul, and spirit will be perfected at the coming of Christ. The crown is waiting, but it will not be given to them that love His appearing until 'that day.'

Then, but not till then, will the full felicity and glory of heaven begin. It is all summed up in one word: 'WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM, FOR WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS.'

## XI.

### THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

IF it were asked which of all the doctrines of the New Testament was most peculiarly and distinctively its own, or what part of the revelation of the Gospel of Christ was most strikingly original, there is little doubt that the answer would be the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. All the other great Christian doctrines, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, Immortality, the future Judgment, have some points of contact even with pagan faiths, and some faint and distorted likeness may be found to them in heathen religions, but the doctrine of the resurrection of the body stands alone in the religion of Christ. There is nothing like it, so far as I am aware, in any other religion in the world. Christianity is the only faith which has dared to have a future for this frail mortal

body, and by its doctrine of resurrection has lifted even the physical part of man's nature to a nobleness and glory undreamt of in any other religion.\*

At the same time it must be confessed that as the doctrine of the resurrection of the body is peculiar to Christianity, so it has had to bear the fiercest assaults of unbelief. It is possible that for some of the violence with which the doctrine has been assailed Christian apologists have to thank themselves, for the doctrine of the resurrection as sometimes stated, even by Christian advocates, does doubtless involve hopeless and insoluble difficulties, but even with the most careful and most Scriptural statement it is not without grave and apparently overwhelming difficulties.

Let us consider for one moment what becomes of a human body after death. It corrupts and decays, and after a certain time its chemical constituents are dissolved, and for the most part are absorbed by the earth. They are then again taken up and absorbed, let us

\* The Egyptian 'Book of the Dead' (see Renouf, Hibbert Lectures) teaches that the soul reunites itself with the body, never again to be separated; but there are differences, too wide to be discussed here, which separate this doctrine from the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

suppose, by the grass which is growing over the grave; and this, in its turn, becomes food for cattle or sheep, and they again become the food of man, so that in this case there is not only the initial difficulty of the original body having been destroyed and absorbed, but the same chemical constituents may form part of different human bodies, and if so, in what sense is it possible to believe in a literal resurrection of this mortal body? Nor is the difficulty attaching to the doctrine fairly met by what the learned and devout Bishop of Durham calls 'unsatisfying appeals to God's omnipotence.' It is neither reasonable nor Christian to get rid of an absurdity or an impossibility by pleading that God can do anything. No doubt it is perfectly true that in one sense Omnipotence can do anything; but in another and far truer sense it is untrue to say God can do anything. The omnipotence of God is always limited by His own infinite wisdom and infinite goodness, and it is dishonouring Him to imagine that He could accomplish an impossibility involving a contradiction in terms.

The real solution of the difficulty—if in our imperfect knowledge both of what matter is and of the constituents of the spiritual body, any solution is to be found—seems to lie, first



of all, in a closer attention to the teaching of Holy Scripture, and then in a more careful analysis of the doctrine of identity. The great classical chapter on the resurrection of the body is the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, and if St. Paul's teaching in that chapter be closely examined, it will be found, I think, to obviate most, if not all, of the objections which are commonly supposed to lie against the doctrine of physical resurrection as ordinarily and crudely stated. The Apostle, it will be remembered, compares the rising again of the body to the rising of the harvest of corn from the seed ; but he expressly says, ' That which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other kind ; but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to each seed a body of its own.'\*

We may therefore conclude from the express words of the Apostle, as well as from the illustration he here uses, that he does not intend us to believe that this actual material body, with all its particles, will rise again from the grave, for just as the seed corn perishes in the ground, so this body will perish ere it becomes the resurrection body. At the same time, there

\* 1 Cor. xv. 37, 38.

is equally little doubt that the Apostle does teach—and the whole teaching of the New Testament is in accordance with his teaching—that in some mysterious way the identity of the resurrection body with this body will be preserved. We shall not receive a totally new body in the next world unconnected with this mortal body, any more than we shall pass into a new spiritual life unconnected with our present spiritual life. The words of the Apostle are too plain and explicit to admit of any doubt on this point. ‘This corruptible,’ he says, ‘must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality;’\* and in another passage he tells us that our Lord will ‘fashion anew the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of His glory,’† a statement that would be wholly without meaning, if not positively untrue, if the resurrection body were not *this body* transformed and transfigured by the power of God.

The question, then, returns, If this material body actually perishes in the grave, and if it be impossible to believe its physical particles will rise again, in what sense is it possible to say the future resurrection body will be identical with this mortal body? To this question

\* 1 Cor. xv. 53.

† Phil. iii. 21.

no better reply can be returned than the answer St. Paul's own illustration affords. The spiritual body will be as closely connected with the natural body as the harvest is connected with the seed which is buried in the earth. The golden harvests of autumn are the same, and yet not the same, as the seed which was sown months before, and in like manner the resurrection body will be the same, and yet not the same, as the material body, which has perished just as the seed-corn has perished in the earth.

Nor can any serious objection be taken to the Apostle's illustration on scientific or philosophical grounds. Sameness of constituent particles is in no sense essential to identity. This present body of ours is continually changing its material particles, so much so that in seven years\* it will contain no single particle it possesses to-day; and yet it remains the same body in spite of the continual change that is going on. So, too, there seems no limit, short of death, to the amount of loss the body can suffer without destruction of identity; hand, arm, foot, leg, all may go, and yet the body still continue the same body it was when all its members were perfect. The identity of the body is like the identity of a river whose

\* Some physiologists say in six weeks.

particles are changing every moment, but whose form remains unchanged.

In what the identity of the body may really reside, whether, as some thinkers have supposed, there is in the body a vital germ, analogous to the vital germ in a grain of corn, which does not perish when the enveloping husk perishes, and which becomes the fruitful seed of the new body that is to be ; whether the soul takes this vital germ with it into the next world, where it lies latent until the day of the resurrection ; or whether, as other thinkers have maintained, the origin of the consciousness of identity is to be sought, not in the body at all, but in the animating and informing soul, are questions which lie beyond our power of solution during the present life. The truth of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, like all other Christian truth, lies between two extremes. On the one hand, we are not to suppose that this physical body, with its material particles of flesh and blood and bone and nerve and sinew, ever rises again ; and on the other, we are not to cut off the future spiritual body from its vital and organic connection with the present body. It will be as closely connected with this body of flesh and blood as an ear of wheat is with the corn that was sown in the earth.

In some mysterious and perhaps inexplicable way we shall recognise the resurrection body as our own body, as being the spiritual counterpart of the material and fleshly body that was ours on earth.

I have already quoted a verse from one of St. Paul's Epistles which has always seemed to me to contain the key to the mystery of the resurrection body. St. Paul tells us that when Christ comes the second time He will 'fashion anew the body of our humiliation, *that it may be conformed to the body of His glory.*' In the next chapter we shall endeavour to unfold the great promise contained in these last words, and to ascertain what will be the glory of the spiritual body; but it is impossible not to notice even here the light they seem to cast on the difficulty we are now discussing. Our spiritual body is to be 'conformed to the body of Christ's glory,' and if so, we may find in Christ's resurrection body a hint as to the mystery which confronts us when we ask, How can the future body be identical with the present mortal body? If a careful study be made of the accounts given in the Gospels of the body of Christ after His resurrection from the grave, it will be seen that the paradox of the resurrection was seen in the resurrection of

Christ's body from the grave. His resurrection body was the same, and yet not the same, as His former body. It was the same, for Mary knew Him by His voice,\* and He Himself pointed His disciples to the marks of the cross in His side and hands and feet,† and He said—although I do not pretend to understand this—it contained 'flesh and bones,'‡ and He was able to eat a piece of 'a broiled fish';§ and yet it was not the same, for some mysterious spiritual powers belonged to it which it did not possess before the resurrection. He was apparently able to go at will from place to place, to pass through closed doors, to appear to His disciples, or to vanish out of their sight as He chose.¶ Nay! even in outward form and appearance there was a change, for neither Mary nor the disciples knew their Lord when they first saw Him,¶ although they recognised Him afterwards. And yet it was the same body, and in like manner whatever changes the resurrection will cause in our bodies they will be the same, and yet not the same, as our present bodies.

Enough has been said of the difficulties con-

\* John xx. 16, 17.

† Luke xxiv. 40.

‡ Luke xxiv. 30.

§ Luke xxiv. 43.

|| John xx. 19; Matt. xxviii. 16; Luke xxiv. 32.

¶ John xx. 15; Luke xxiv. 16.



nected with the doctrine of the resurrection of the body; it is time now to turn to some of the results involved in that doctrine.

1. In the first place, the Christian doctrine of the resurrection provides for the completion and perfecting of our humanity at the second coming of Christ.

If there were no resurrection of the body, not only would one part of our present existence have no connection with the future life, but the whole of our humanity would not share in the redemption of Christ. Man is not man without his body; he is only man when all the parts of his compound nature are conjoined, and although the body may be the lowest element in that nature, it is still an element to be taken account of, and it has its own place in the redemption of Christ. The man that is to rise is not a mutilated and imperfect man; it is man in all the fulness of his nature, and his body, not less than his soul, is to share in the glory of Christ.

And here will be seen the necessary imperfection and incompleteness of the Intermediate State. It will be for the saints full of blessedness, for they will be 'with Christ,' which is 'very far better' than the present life. They will enjoy a closeness and intimacy of fellow-



ship with their Lord impossible here ; they will see Him 'face to face,' and yet it will be far from being perfect and complete in glory. The soul there is without its organ and expression in the body. The 'redemption of the body,' for which the Apostle eagerly waited, has not yet taken place, and not till it rises from the grave, and shares in the fulness of Christ's redeeming power, being 'conformed to the body of His glory,' will humanity be perfected and glorified. Thus the resurrection of the body is part of 'the blessed hope' associated with the second advent of Christ. It forms the end of the relative imperfection of the Intermediate State and the first moment of the perfected blessedness of heaven. It was the vision of the fulness of this glory which led the Apostle to exclaim : 'For in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.'\*

2. The resurrection of the body thus completing our personality will eternally guarantee and express our personal identity.

The consciousness of identity, the assurance that I am myself, for ever myself, and not another, is one of the fundamental mysteries, as it is one of the most indubitable facts, of our

\* 2 Cor. v. 2.

being. That 'abysmal sense of personality,' as it has been called, which can never be explained without the assumption of a permanent Ego beneath and behind all the fleeting changes of experience, is the deepest and most solemn reality in our moral life, and gives even to the most trivial human life an eternal significance and value. And as the resurrection of the body is the final completion and glorification of our humanity, so it will be the everlasting revelation of our personal identity. Heaven—I am speaking in this chapter only of the blessed resurrection of the saints—will not be peopled with ghostly shades, dim and vague shadows of a former existence; it will be we ourselves, if we are Christ's, who will be there, in all the completeness and fulness of our personality, with all that makes us ourselves, and all that separates and distinguishes us from one another, with all those differences and peculiarities of individuality which create our personal life; each one known and recognised as himself and not another. 'Thy brother shall rise again,' our Lord told the sorrowing Martha,\* and heaven will preserve in larger and fuller measure, and in all the greatness of its eternal blessedness, all the sweet and sacred relation-

\* John xi. 23.

ships of human life. Love that is founded in God is eternal as God Himself.

3. And, finally, the resurrection of the body secures the continuity of the moral life of eternity with that of earth.

It may even openly and outwardly reveal the permanence of the character we have made for ourselves on earth. It was a deep and suggestive saying of Swedenborg that the soul creates the spiritual body it is eternally to inhabit, and there is much both in Scripture and in the facts of human life to lead us to believe that in some mysterious way the outward form will be moulded and fashioned by the inward life.

‘For of the soul the body form doth take,  
For soul is form, and doth the body make,’

sings one of our own poets, and no one can fail to be struck with the fact that the most significant part of the body, the face, often bears on itself a silent witness to the hidden character within. There are faces which are already radiant with celestial beauty, the light of which reminds us, as we gaze on them, of the words we read of Stephen’s transfigured countenance, ‘They saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.’\* In one of our modern novels,† ‘a

\* Acts vi. 15.

† I take this illustration from a beautiful and suggestive sermon on ‘The Hope of the Body,’ by the Very Reverend the Dean of Christchurch.

young American artist, brilliant, unprincipled, conceited, has been living a wholly selfish life in Rome for some time, when his mother and her adopted daughter come from America to visit him. And the first time he sees them—simple, pious, loving folk, who have been living in constant anxiety for his sake—he suddenly turns to his mother, in the middle of a sentence, and asks abruptly: “What makes you look so old? What has happened to your face these two years? It has changed its expression.” “Your mother has prayed a good deal,” said the sister simply. “Well, it makes a very good face,” answers the brother; “very interesting, very solemn. It has very fine lines in it.” Who has not been struck again and again with this same heavenly expression in faces where the

‘Eyes are homes of silent prayer,’

or with the gradual elevation and clarifying of the countenance, the new fairness and comeliness gradually stealing over the features, in those who have been lifted by Christ out of a life of uncleanness or drunkenness, or with the strange and unearthly look shining like a heavenly light on the face of some dear and aged saints, who had caught something of the image and beauty of God as they walked with

Him? The 'Mark of God,' as the Book of the Revelation says, was 'on their foreheads'; and so, too, alas! there are faces which bear 'the mark of the beast' on them, the brand of shame and sin printed even on the look of those who are serving the devil. The countenance is moulded by the soul, and if it 'half conceals,' it also 'half reveals, the soul within.'

In the eternal world, and with the resurrection of the body, the glory or the foulness of the moral life within will be revealed, and the perpetuity of character will thus be manifested and declared. 'We must all be made manifest,' St. Paul says, 'before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things through the body according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad,'\* and our Lord Himself warned His disciples that it was possible some of them would 'enter into life maimed and halt,' with powers and faculties lost because they had been misused or unused on earth. The redeemed will bear even on the body the image of Christ. If the life of Jesus can be made manifest in this mortal body, much more will it be revealed in the body of

\* 2 Cor. v. 10. This is the true rendering of the Apostle's words, as the margin of the Revised Version attests.

glory, which will be like the glorified body of Jesus. We are now building a character either of 'gold and silver and costly stones,' or of 'wood, hay, and stubble,' which is to last for ever. Character is the sum of life, and destiny the sum of character. Eternity will be the harvest reaped from the seed sown in time, and the body, as the organ and instrument of the soul, will proclaim for ever its glory or its shame.

## XII.

### THE SPIRITUAL BODY.

IN our last chapter we examined the teaching of Scripture on the great doctrine of the resurrection of the body; in this paper I propose to complete the subject by considering the nature of the resurrection body so far as it is revealed to us in the New Testament.

I. In the first place—and the fact will repay a moment's careful consideration—it will be a spiritual body as contrasted with this present fleshly body. In the great passage, to which allusion has already been made, the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle contrasts the 'natural' with the 'spiritual' body;\* but these terms, unfortunately, do not convey any very definite or distinct idea to the English reader. It will be necessary, therefore, in order to reach the

\* 2 Cor. xv. 44.



meaning of the Apostle's words, to examine more closely what has been called 'the tripartite nature of man.'

In our popular philosophy, not less than in the teaching of the New Testament, man is generally said to be made up of body, soul, and spirit. Now, the second of these constituent elements of human nature—the soul—is the animal side of that nature; it is that part of our nature which, to some extent, the lower animals share with us, although in a lower degree. All that makes an animal to differ from a vegetable is comprised in the word 'soul.' The soul in man thinks, perceives, feels, loves, desires, hates; whilst the spirit, on the other hand, is that higher side of our nature which is turned towards God, and which links us with God, just as the soul links us with the lower creation. Now, St. Paul says this present body is a 'natural' body—a word that, literally rendered, would be a 'soulish body'; that is, this body of flesh, fearfully and wonderfully made though it be, is the instrument and organ of the lower rather than of the higher part of our nature. It is allied to the animal rather than to the Divine in man. It is a 'soul-body,' partaking of the special weaknesses and the special temptations

and sins of the soul. It is not a help, but a hindrance, to the spiritual life; for although it is true that the seat of sin is not in the body, but in the will, this present fleshly body is too often in league with the corrupt will, and supplies it with many of its most perilous and seducing temptations. So deep, indeed, is the hostility of the body to the higher spiritual life in man, that Scripture has taken one of the many names the body bears—'the flesh'—to express all that in man opposes the will of God. The various forms of asceticism which have sprung up in the Christian Church—the cave of the hermit, the cell of the monk or of the nun, the flagellations and mortifications to which the body has been subjected—would never have taken hold of the Church as they did had it not been for the fact that the Christian consciousness felt the body was not a friend, but a foe, to the nobler and more spiritual life in man. Even an Apostle had to 'bruise' his body and to bring it into bondage, 'lest,' as he says, 'by any means after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected';\* and even when the body is 'bruised,' how often it is felt that 'the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak'! In our best moments,

\* 1 Cor. ix. 27.

when we are most conscious of the presence of God, and the spiritual world is most real to us, we are ready to exclaim with St. Paul: 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?''\*

It is this longing for a body which shall no longer be a hindrance, but shall be a help, to the spiritual life, and which shall be the organ and expression of the higher rather than of the lower nature in man, which the promise of the spiritual body meets and answers. 'There is,' St. Paul says, 'a natural,' 'a soul-body,' and there is a 'spiritual body.' The body which the saints shall receive at the resurrection will be the perfect instrument of the noblest side of their nature. This present physical body allies us with the first Adam, and through him with the lower animals; the new and spiritual body will ally us with the Second Adam, who is 'the Lord from heaven,' and will be 'conformed,' as we shall see, 'to the body of His glory.'†

This is one part of the great hope of the resurrection of the body. Notwithstanding the wonderful and exquisite adaptation to our necessities which is seen in this present body; notwithstanding the beauty it often bears, and which has made it possible to speak of 'the

\* Rom. vii. 42.

† Phil. iii. 21.

human form Divine'; notwithstanding that real glory which St. Paul admits it possesses\*—this body of the flesh is not such a friend to our highest welfare that we should desire it to be immortal. It is not only subject to weakness and to pain and disease and death, but too often, as we have seen, it is in league with the corrupt desires of the soul, and through the gateways of sense some of our most perilous temptations enter and assault the soul. Even at best, the body is but a poor and imperfect instrument of the divinest side of our nature; and there are few of Christ's people who have not longed for the time when just as a perfect instrument answers instantly to the touch of the player, so their body shall answer in quick response to the movements of the higher life within. This hope the doctrine of the resurrection affords us. Although for a little time 'we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened,' the groan is not one of despair, but of longing and expectant hope. We 'wait for the adoption, to wit, for the redemption of the body,' when the spiritual body, no longer a foe to, or at most a reluctant servant of, the Divine life, shall be its perfect instrument and expression, and shall thrill through and through in

\* 1 Cor. xv. 40.

responsive music to the touch of the Eternal Spirit who dwells within.

II. St. Paul, however, goes farther than the statement that there will be a spiritual body, for he defines its main characteristics, and it is these characteristics we shall now consider.

1. It will be, first of all, an incorruptible body. 'It is sown,' we read, 'in corruption; it is raised in incorruption.'\*

This present body is a body of 'death.' It is under the inexorable law of decay, which sooner or later ends in its dissolution. It is like a clock that is always running down, and that cannot go even for twenty-four hours unless it is wound up again. Each moment of our physical life is literally a moment of death; there are cells exhausted and dying, nervous energy degraded or spent, blood losing its vital properties. So long as the supply of vital energy exceeds the loss, we live; the moment the loss exceeds the supply, we begin to die.

This is the law of the present physical and 'soul'-body we possess, and out of it arises the fact that the most ghastly and horrible forms of decay are only seen where there has been previous life, and the higher the life the more

\* I Cor. xv. 43.

awful the decay—‘*Corruptio optimi pessima.*’ A bit of limestone worn away by a running stream, or crushed in the stones of a mill, is not horrible; even a dead and decaying leaf awakens no repulsion in us—the horror of corruption only begins to be seen in the dead animal, and it reaches its darkest and foulest riot in a human grave. ‘It is sown in corruption.’

Out of this corruptibility of the present body arise pain and death. They are really one and the same thing, for pain is only death beginning, as death is only pain ended. We come into this world subject at once to the law of pain and the law of death. It is true that God uses both of them as the ministers of His love and grace, for oftentimes the discipline of pain has been a blessing in disguise, and the Gospel of His love has been borne to many a heart by the Angel of Death; but notwithstanding this, both pain and death are the direct results of sin, and follow it as the shadow of our guilt. ‘The body is dead because of sin.’

But the spiritual body shall be emancipated for ever from the law of sin and death. It is ‘raised in incorruption.’ The ‘last enemy that shall be destroyed is death,’ and then the spirit, laying aside for ever this frail and cor-



ruptible tabernacle of flesh, shall enter the 'house not made with hands'—the 'building of God, eternal in the heavens.'\*

How this hope affects us may depend in some measure on our bodily health. If we are happily in possession of youthful vigour and energy—if it is still a joy to us even to live, and a headache or weariness is almost unknown—it is possible we shall not be very deeply moved by the prospect of an incorruptible and spiritual body; but there are others to whom the thought will be one of 'joy unspeakable and full of glory.' I think of the great company of weary sufferers to whom life has been one long battle with weakness and pain, who have hardly known what a day of real freedom from suffering means, and who have tried to bear the heavy burden without a murmur, and I rejoice that such a hope is before them of a life in which 'death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more,' for 'the first things are passed away.'† I think also of the aged and feeble who, feeling the weight of the years, and thinking of the time when they could walk and work with the best, sadly contrast it with the failing powers and slow and painful movements

\* 2 Cor. v. 1.

† Rev. xxi. 4.



of their present life, and I rejoice, too, that for them there is the great hope of a body never again to grow feeble or old. To know that when the trumpet shall sound 'the dead shall be raised incorruptible,' and that they will then possess a body of immortal youth, is surely a prospect that ought to make the evening-time of life like an autumn sunset lighted up with the glory of God.

2. Again, the spiritual body will be a glorious body. Incorruptibility is negative rather than positive, and we enter now on the positive glories of the resurrection body.

'It is sown,' St. Paul says, 'in dishonour; it is raised in glory.' 'In dishonour.' Possibly there may be a reference in the word the Apostle uses to the sense of shame, springing out of sin, which belongs to the body now. An animal has no sense of shame, and a child has none; but a man has, because he is conscious of sin. It is true that just as God uses pain, which is one of the results of sin, as a minister of His grace, so He takes the sense of shame, the offspring of sin, and uses it for His own wise and gracious purpose. He makes it the guardian and protector of virtue, the white enamel shielding it from injury from without. There will be no shame in heaven, for there

will be no sin there; and in this sense, as in others, it will be true that we die old men, but wake up little children.

There is, however, more than the absence of shame implied in the 'glory' of the spiritual body. The word 'glory' is generally associated in the Bible with the idea of radiancy of light, and we shall do no violence to the Apostle's words if we say that one feature of the spiritual body of the redeemed will be its radiant and perfect beauty. In the few instances recorded in Scripture of the outward appearance of the bodies of those who were standing in the immediate presence of God, it is remarkable that in each case the body itself is said to have shone with heavenly light. The face of Moses, after his long communion with God, shone so that 'the children of Israel could not look steadfastly' on it;\* and when Moses and Elijah appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, they appeared 'in glory.'† Our Lord Himself, on the same mount, was 'transfigured,' His garments so penetrated with the radiant lustre of the body they clothed that they 'became glistening, exceeding white, so as no fuller on earth can whiten them.'‡ The face of Stephen shone as it 'had been the face of an angel,'§

\* 2 Cor. iii. 7. † Luke ix. 31. ‡ Mark ix. 3. § Acts vi. 15.

and sometimes on a death-bed the countenance of the dying saint has been lit up with 'a light that never shone on sea or shore,' as if it had caught already some reflection of the glory which was to be revealed.

All these are hints and prophecies of the glory of the spiritual body that will bear on its celestial beauty the impress and the likeness of the celestial beauty within. The Greek language has one word for the good and the beautiful, and the common speech of daily life bears witness to the close connection that always exists between goodness and beauty. We speak of 'an ugly deed' and of a 'lovely character,' of 'a foul crime' and 'a beautiful life'; and broken and incomplete as the witness here is, there is enough to enable us to believe that in the eternal world the life and the light will be for ever one.

On the other side of the truth, the horrible deformity of sin that will be written on the bodies of the wicked, I do not care to dwell; it is better to leave the miserable spectacle where Scripture leaves the lost, in the 'outer darkness.' Perhaps the most beautiful, as well as the most striking, image of the transformation the resurrection will work in this mortal body is to be found in the change that takes

place when the butterfly is born. At first it was but a worm, crawling on the earth, tied to this lower world, a creature of weakness and dishonour and death. Then it seemed to die, and for a while the life was folded up in the little narrow coffin of the shell of the chrysalis. Here it awaits its resurrection-morning. At length the call of God comes, and out of that bed of death, or of what looked like death, mounts on a sudden to heaven the winged splendour of the butterfly, a flying rainbow of colour, no longer a creature of the earth, but an inhabitant of the sky.\* It is no wonder the Greeks called the soul and the butterfly by the same name!

3. The spiritual body will be, lastly, a body of power.

‘It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.’ We speak of the power of man, but what we really mean is the power of his mind, not of his body. For his size, man is the weakest of all the animals in physical strength. This present body, even in the maturity of its life, is far from being a body of ‘power,’ and how much more is its weakness manifest when disease wastes and death finally destroys its

\* I am indebted for this illustration to Dr. George Macdonald’s novel, ‘The Seaboard Parish.’

strength! But the force of the Apostle's words may, perhaps, better be illustrated if we consider the special signs of the physical weakness of this mortal body. If its power is limited, its powers are even more so.

(1) First of all, the faculties of sense are, more or less, limited in their range. It is true the eye, with its wonderful machinery of vision, seems almost to have the power of annihilating distance; but even the eye is strictly limited, both in its range of vision and in its capacity of seeing. We see the merest fraction of what is to be seen. The microscope and the telescope both reveal to us a whole universe of which the eye by itself knew nothing. There are bands of colour and radiant tints of beauty in the spectrum and the rainbow no human eye has ever seen. It is so with hearing. We only hear the smallest part of the harmony or the discord which fills the air about us. 'The music of the spheres' might be no poetic phrase if our sense of hearing were more perfect; and it is possible we might catch the rhythm of the mighty movement of stars and suns as they move in solemn order through space—

„ 'There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st  
 But in his motion like an angel sings,  
 But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
 Doth grossly close us in, we cannot hear it.'

Each fluttering leaf, every movement of the wings of the tiniest insect, each ray of light that trembles in the morning or the evening glory, is making melody to God, but we hear it not. If our senses were indefinitely increased in power, what a sealed universe, what an apocalypse of wonder and glory, would suddenly be revealed to us!

(2) Then, again, the faculties of the body are not only limited in their range, but they are restricted in number. We speak of the five senses as if there could only be five; but it needs only a moment's reflection to perceive that sight and hearing and smell and taste and touch do not exhaust the world of possible powers. Indeed, there are other powers already in the body, such as the sense of heat and cold, which may fairly be regarded as additional senses; but when we have reckoned up all the possible senses we now possess, how comparatively few they are when compared with the unexplored world of existences outside! It is no idle fancy to say that it is possible that there are visitants from other worlds, messengers from the great universe of existence, knocking for admission to the soul, but finding no gateway of knowledge by which they may enter. There are facts—some of them lying deep in



what has been called the 'subliminal consciousness'—which seem at times to come so near to us as to startle us with their presence, and then as suddenly evade our quest, vanishing out of sight again in the dim light of the unknown. If only we possessed other and richer faculties of senses, it is possible that we should be able to see through the densest matter, to hear the softest whisper a thousand miles away, to behold a wonder and glory in God's creation undreamt of now.

(3) Then, again, the present physical body is very restricted as to its powers of locomotion.

Thought is free, and moves freely and instantaneously over immeasurable distances in space, but the body is unable to follow the movements of the soul which dwells within. We cannot move as we would. We are impatient of the slowness of our own powers of progression, and so we use the lower animals, and utilize steam to assist our speed. Even the railway is not quick enough to satisfy our thought, and so we invent the electric telegraph, but telegraphing takes time. Nothing keeps pace with thought. It is swifter than even the lightning-flash, and we often long to move as swift as thought. And one day we



may. Is there anything absurd in the supposition that the spiritual body may be as quick as thought itself in all its movements? Are there not hints already existing of such a possibility? Is there not always a sense of repressed and suppressed energy in all the movements of the body? Even now, hand and finger and foot move instantly at the dictates of the will, and are almost as rapid as thought itself in obeying the will; and if a part of the body here is capable of this immediate response to the will, may it not be possible that the whole body shall one day move as quickly in obedience to the commands of the soul? Part of the new power of the spiritual body may be its capacity of accompanying, with all its varied train of senses and capacities, the movements of thought as it ranges through the universe of God. Our Lord Himself, as we have seen, after His resurrection, seems to have had physical powers he did not possess before He rose from the dead. He passes through closed doors at will. He apparently transports Himself from place to place. He appears to His disciples at will, and at will vanishes out of their sight.\* He transcends the law of gravitation by His ascension into heaven; and if ‘the

\* John xx. 19; Matt. xxviii. 16; Luke xxiv. 32.

body of this humiliation' is to be 'fashioned like to the body of Christ's glory,' it may be that it will be the glory of the redeemed, no longer to be 'cabined, cribbed, confined' by this fleshly body of sense, but to be able to range free and unfettered, performing God's high commands, and passing quick as thought from world to world, or from one high service of God to another.

(4) Then, again, our present consciousness of existence is often slow and sluggish, and this is sometimes due to the physical imperfections of the body.

Our idea of time, I need hardly say, is derived from the succession of mental states within, and necessarily implies memory; for if memory were gone, time would have no reality and no meaning for us. The *measures of time*, however, as distinct from the consciousness of time, are entirely artificial, and are derived solely from natural sources, such as the revolution of the earth on its own axis, or its motion round the sun. Now, these external measurements of time determine not only the artificial divisions of the day and the month and the year, but they also help to maintain within us an equable rate of living. If a man were wholly unconscious of any external measurements of

time, if day and night and summer and winter had no meaning for him, life would be measured not by minutes and hours, but by the rapidity or the slowness of his own consciousness. Indeed, it is often so measured now, for we have all experienced the illusiveness of the ordinary measures of time during unusual joy or unusual grief. An hour has been a day, or a day has been only a minute, in the misery or the joy of those moments of deeper experience. In his 'Physical Theory of Another Life,' Isaac Taylor says that it is quite possible the little ephemera, that lives but a single day, may live a century of existence in that brief life; and it is certainly true that a large part of the regularity of the consciousness of life is due to the regular movements of sun and moon, which regulate our measures of time. If it were not for the steady and equable measurement they afford, consciousness might become so rapid as to exhaust the brain in a whirl of thought, or the life of a sluggish boor might become so intolerably long as to kill him of ennui. With a spiritual body, however, these artificial and external measurements and limitations of time and of consciousness may no longer be needed. The spiritual consciousness may be so intense as to compress into what would be a moment of

earthly time years of love and joy and bliss ; and in like manner it is possible that in one short moment may be concentrated an inconceivable amount of sorrow and suffering. Eternal life and eternal death are both immeasurable, not only in length of duration, but in intensity of meaning.

Such in part, at all events, seems to be the hope of 'the redemption of the body' held out to us in the Gospel of Christ. In one of her letters, Miss Martineau says that Christianity 'vilifies the body.' The assertion is singularly untrue, for instead of 'vilifying the body,' the Gospel of Christ associates it with the soul in the glory of Christ's redeeming work. It is to be the organ of the spiritual life, as responsive to it as a perfect instrument to the hand of a master. It is to be 'fashioned' like to 'the body of the glory' of Christ, and to share throughout eternity the perfect bliss and the fulness of power of the redeemed soul.

# *THE LAST THINGS*



## I.

### THE DOOM OF THE LOST.

#### I. THE TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE.

IN bringing to a conclusion this series of papers on 'The Intermediate State,' I wish, in the first place, to consider and to discuss—I trust with a deep sense of the solemnity of the subject—'The Doom of the Lost.' May the Spirit of all truth guide us here, as everywhere, into the knowledge of the truth, and may the God of love mercifully pardon anything that may be written which is not in accordance with the teaching of His own blessed Word!

Until very lately, the principal opinions which were held on the future state of the wicked might have been classified under three distinct heads. First of all, there was what, with sufficient accuracy for my present purpose, may be

called the Orthodox View. According to this theory, all who died finally impenitent, and rejecting the mercy of God as offered to them in Jesus Christ, all the heathen who had not lived up to such light as they might have possessed, would be doomed to an endless eternity of punishment and of suffering. On the nature of the penal suffering of the lost considerable differences of opinion have existed from very early ages in the Christian Church, but that the suffering was eternal and irremediable was part of the traditional and orthodox creed of Christendom, and was held alike in the Greek, Roman, and Protestant Churches.

A second and opposite opinion, however, of which the learned and large-hearted Origen was the chief expounder in the early Church, and which has numbered among its defenders some distinguished and saintly names, has been held by a minority in the Catholic Church. This view, which is generally known as Universalism, denied both the eternity of sin and of its consequent punishment, and affirmed that it was an outrage both on the love and goodness of God to believe that He would ever permit any creatures to be called into being who were to be doomed to endless misery in

hell. However severe and terrible the punishment that awaited the impenitent and rebellious sinner in a future life, it was remedial and restorative in its effect, and, as the result, possibly after long ages of disciplinary pain, all the wicked would turn from sin and be finally restored to the love and favour of Almighty God.

A third opinion, which in our own day has been defended with great force and a large and cultured charity by the Rev. Edward White, is known by the name of Conditional Immortality, or Life in Christ alone. According to this view, man is not naturally immortal, but possesses immortality only when in union with the Lord Jesus Christ. The wicked, therefore, after enduring such punishment for sin as an all-righteous and holy God may justly inflict upon them for their guilt, will suffer eternal destruction, and be blotted out of existence altogether, and sin and suffering, with the extinction of the wicked, will finally disappear from the eternal kingdom of God.

These have been the chief varieties of opinion held on the solemn mystery of the future destiny of the wicked, but of late years there have been slowly growing up two further developments of theological thought on this subject,



one of them being a distinct modification of the universalist theory.

The second of these newer opinions, whilst strongly leaning to the doctrine of the final salvation of all men, forbears any dogmatic assertion of universalism, and cherishes it only as a hope. Archdeacon Farrar in the Anglican Church, and the late Mr. Baldwin Brown among the Congregationalists, have been the most prominent defenders of this modified universalism; for whilst both of them refuse to assert positively the restoration of all sinners to the felicity of heaven, mainly because of the unknown possibilities of resistance to God which they admit lie hidden in the evil will of man, they agree in the hope expressed in the exquisite and well-known lines of 'In Memoriam':

- ' Oh, yet we trust that somehow good  
Will be the final goal of ill,  
To pangs of nature, sins of will,  
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood ;
- ' That nothing walks with aimless feet ;  
That not one life shall be destroy'd,  
Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete ;
- ' Behold, we know not anything ;  
I can but trust that good shall fall  
At last—far off—at last to all,  
And every winter change to spring.'

Another and still more serious change of opinion has yet to be noted, and as it is the one that in the main will be maintained and defended in this paper, I shall endeavour to state it as carefully as possible. According to this last view, nothing is definitely revealed in Holy Scripture of the *duration* of the punishment of the wicked, for the subject seems purposely left undecided; but enough is said to lead us to believe that wilful rejection of Christ in this life will be followed by inconceivable and terrible suffering in the next, and solemn responsibility is accordingly laid on all who preach the Gospel of Christ to declare that final unbelief and sin will be visited by God with 'indignation and anguish, tribulation and wrath,' in the world to come.

With certain minor varieties of detail, this last view has of late years been held by many devout students of Scripture, and there is a growing consensus of opinion among them that, even if we refuse dogmatically to assert the endlessness of the future punishment of sin, it is our duty to declare, with no hesitancy of speech, but with the deepest solemnity and tenderness of conviction, with what Mr. Moody once called 'a tear in the voice,' that it is a

‘fearful thing for the wicked to fall into the hands of the living God.’

Widely as this last opinion is held, I am not aware that any serious attempt has been made to establish it by an appeal to the joint authority of Scripture and of reason. Dr. Clemance, indeed, in a little work published some years since, and which is a model of painstaking and fair inquiry, has investigated with scrupulous care the teaching of Scripture on the meaning of the word ‘eternal’; but as the line of argument I propose to pursue differs altogether from that followed by Dr. Clemance, I shall reserve any further reference to the conclusions at which he has arrived to a later period in this discussion.

I. Let us, in the first place, endeavour to ascertain the testimony of Holy Scripture on this solemn and awful subject.

And here, let me say at once, we are met with an initial and apparently insuperable difficulty. Scripture speaks, as I now propose to show, with two distinct and opposing voices. On the one hand there are passages which seem to assert the endlessness of the future punishment of the wicked, while on the other hand there are many texts which appear to teach the universal salvation of all men.

1. Taking the former series of texts first, we have such verses as the following\*: ‘The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling hath surprised the godless ones. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?’† ‘And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men who have transgressed against Me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.’‡ ‘And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.’§ ‘Whose fan is in His hand, throughly to cleanse His threshing-floor, and to gather the wheat into His garner, but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire.’|| ‘If thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off; it is good for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than to have thy two hands go into hell, into the unquenchable fire.’¶ ‘Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.’\*\* ‘Then shall He say also unto them on the left

\* I take these passages from the Revised Version.

† Isa. xxxiii. 14.

‡ *Ibid.*, lvi. 24.

§ Dan. xii. 2.

|| Luke iii. 17

¶ Mark ix. 43.

\*\* *Ibid.*, ix. 48.

hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels.’\* ‘These shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.’† ‘Angels which kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, He hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.’‡ ‘The smoke of their torments goeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day and night, that they worship the beast and his image, and whoso receiveth the mark of his name.’§ ‘He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still; and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still.’|| ‘Woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had not been born.’¶

We may add to these passages, which are taken only as a sample from a great number of similar texts, those which seem decisively to limit salvation to this life alone, such verses as, ‘Beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, that they which would pass from hence to you may not be able, and that

\* Matt. xxv. 41.

† Jude 6.

|| Rev. xxii. 11.

† *Ibid.*, xxv. 46.

§ Rev. xiv. 11.

¶ Matt. xxvi. 24.

none may cross over from thence to us.’\* ‘Now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of salvation.’† ‘How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?’‡ ‘If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries.’§

Perhaps the strongest statement in all the New Testament on the apparent hopelessness of the punishment of the lost are the words of our Lord on the doom of those who ‘blaspheme against the Holy Spirit.’ Christ says, ‘Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an *eternal sin*.’||

It is needless to multiply quotations. Here we have a strong body of evidence which has been held both by Jewish and Christian theologians definitely to teach the eternity of the future punishment of the lost, and the consequent eternity of sin; or, as some have preferred to put it, the eternity of sin and its consequent eternity of punishment. Whatever refinements an ingenious and dexterous exegesis

\* Luke xvi. 26.    † 2 Cor. vi. 2.    ‡ Heb. ii. 3.  
§ *Ibid.*, x. 26, 27.    || Mark iii. 29.



may be able to introduce into the meaning of these texts, it cannot, I think, be doubted that the impression they leave on the mind is that beyond the grave there is no hope for the lost—that as the blessedness of the saved is eternal, so the doom of the wicked is also eternal.

2. The evidence of Scripture, however, is not all on one side: for, strong as is its apparent teaching on the eternity of future punishment and the hopelessness of the state of the wicked, this teaching is balanced by a large number of passages which seem to state unreservedly the salvation of all men:

‘And I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’\*  
 ‘He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger for ever.’† ‘On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’‡ ‘For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him.’§  
 ‘And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself.’|| ‘And He is the

\* Gen. xii. 3.

† Psalm ciii. 9.

‡ John i. 29.

§ *Ibid.*, iii. 17.

|| John xii. 32.



propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.\* ‘Unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth.† ‘That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.‡ ‘For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell; and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens.§ ‘For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that He might have mercy upon all.’|| ‘Then cometh the end, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death. For, He put all things in subjection under His feet. But when he saith, All things are put in sub-

\* I John ii. 2. † Eph. i. 10. ‡ Phil. ii. 10, 11.  
§ Col. i. 19, 20. || Rom. xi. 32.

jection, it is evident that He is excepted who did subject all things unto Him. And when all things have been subjected unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all.\* ‘Who willeth that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.’† ‘For to this end we labour and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe.’‡ ‘And every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying, Unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever.’§ ‘And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more: neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away. And He that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He saith, Write: for these words are faithful and true.’|| ‘And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God

\* I Cor. xv. 24-28.

† I Tim. ii. 4.

‡ *Ibid.*, iv. 10.

§ Rev. v. 13.

|| Rev. xxi. 4, 5.

and of the Lamb shall be therein : and His servants shall do Him service.’\*

Even the meaning of the word rendered ‘everlasting’ or ‘eternal’ in our English Bibles, and so often appealed to by advocates of the older orthodox theory, is by no means without doubt. The word occurs some seventy-one times in the New Testament, and Dr. Clemance has shown that there are certainly some passages in which it cannot bear the meaning of ‘everlasting.’ Thus, we read of ‘the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested’;† and of ‘the grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal’;‡ and in the Old Testament the corresponding Hebrew word rendered is often used of a duration that is certainly not ‘eternal’ in our meaning of the word. Let any reader consider the following passages, and he will see at once the truth of this statement : Deut. xxxiii. 16, Deut. xv. 17. Gen. xlviii. 4, Exod. xxxii. 13, 2 Kings v. 27, Hab. iii. 6.

We have come, then, to the following conclusion : So far as the teaching of the Scripture is concerned, it speaks with two apparently opposite voices on this solemn subject, one set of passages appearing to affirm, and another

\* Rev. xxii. 3. † Rom. xvi. 25. ‡ 2 Tim. i. 9.

appearing to deny, the endlessness of the future punishment of sin. We seem on the one hand to be told that all will not be saved, and on the other hand to be assured that all will be saved, and advocates of either view may appeal with confidence to a large number of texts in support of their belief. It has been the non-recognition of this divided voice of Scripture which has been the root of all the endless controversies which have been waged on the subject. The meaning of this apparent antinomy in the teaching of Holy Scripture will be considered later on ; all that I am at present concerned to point out is the fact itself. The most careful and prolonged study of the actual testimony of the Bible has only deepened in my own mind the conviction that it not only speaks, as I have said, with two apparently irreconcilable voices, but that these double and contrasted passages of Scripture are purposely left in the sacred Volume as containing together the truth of God on the future state of the lost.

It remains, before considering the meaning of this apparently insoluble opposition, to ask whether reason, apart from Scripture, can afford us any more definite teaching, or clearer light, on the duration of sin and of its punishment. It is this subject we shall discuss in our next chapter.

## II.

### THE EVIDENCE OF THE REASON.

IN our last chapter we discussed the teaching of Scripture on this solemn and momentous subject, and we found that Scripture spoke with apparently two voices on the future of the finally impenitent, or, perhaps we ought rather to say, on the eternity of sin and of its consequent punishment. On the one hand, there were a large number of passages which seemed to declare, in unequivocal terms, the eternal punishment of 'eternal sin,' and the hopelessness of the doom of those who have died in wilful rejection of Christ; whilst, on the other hand, there was also a considerable body of texts, remarkable both for their number and variety, which appeared to declare, with equal emphasis, the final restoration of all created things to the love and authority of God. The doctrine of Scripture ends, therefore, in an

apparently insoluble antinomy. The reason for, and the meaning of, this antinomy we shall endeavour to ascertain later on, and we shall see whether the antinomy is peculiar to this doctrine of 'the last things,' or is not rather a mark of our having reached some ultimate truth, the full apprehension of which lies beyond the powers of our reason as it is at present.

Having, however, failed to obtain a distinct answer from Holy Scripture—our supreme authority, I need hardly say, on all matters of religious truth—it remains for us to turn to the reason, and to ask what reply it may have to offer on the question of the future state of the wicked, and the duration of sin and of its punishment.

In endeavouring to ascertain the verdict of the reason, there are, in the first place, many reasons which seem to point to the hopelessness of the doom of the lost, and it is these reasons we are now to examine.

Now, it is certain that a large number of those to whom the offer of mercy in Christ is made in this life die, to all appearance, impenitent and unsaved, and the question is whether there are any valid grounds, *from the reason alone*, to expect that those who thus



‘ die in their sins ’ will repent and turn to God in another life. Is there, in a word, reason to believe, not in the possibility, but in the probability, of moral change after death ?

Manifestly, if any such change is to take place in an impenitent and rebellious will, it can only be from one of two causes—either (*a*) the will must itself turn freely to God, welcoming, it may be, the offer of grace He may make for its assistance in the work of repentance ; or (*b*) God Himself, by the omnipotence of His grace, must overpower the resistance of the will to Himself, and coerce it into submission.

Now, of these alternatives, the first is clearly most improbable, and that for three reasons.

First, it is certain that the inevitable tendency of character is to run into a fixed state. Acts, as we have seen, pass into habits ; habits harden into character until it becomes, as the Greek word for ‘ character ’ signifies, something ‘ engraved ’—fixed in a permanent form. The truth is, our moral freedom always tends to end in necessity, not, indeed, in the mechanical necessity of matter, whose phenomena follow one another in orderly sequence, without possibility of variation, the same consequents always succeeding the same antecedents, but in the



higher necessity of moral life, which, for good or for evil, is always parting with its freedom in each successive act of choice. This drift of character to a permanent state has its blessed side, for it is one of the great securities for 'the perseverance of the saints,' and for their final establishment in holiness; but it has its awful side as well, for it seems to make it certain that 'evil men will wax worse and worse,' and it helps to explain the solemn words which come near the close of the Book of the Revelation, 'He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still' (or 'yet more'); 'and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still; and he that is holy, let him be made holy still.'\* When the King, in the parable of the marriage feast, ordered the servants to 'bind' the man who had no 'wedding garment' 'hand and foot,' and to 'cast him out into the outer darkness,' there may be a hint in this 'binding' of the inexorable and terrible chains of destiny sin forges for itself. In any case, reason holds out no hope of any alteration of character when that character has once become fixed in its permanent mould.

Then, secondly, if it be said that, apart from

\* Rev. xxii. 11.

the overpowering of the rebellion of the will by the grace of God, of which we shall speak in a moment, it is conceivable that God may so influence the impenitent heart by the revelation of His love as to break down its hostility to Himself, it may at once be replied that it is difficult, if not impossible, to conceive of any moral suasion addressed to the will in the next world greater than that which had already been applied, and unsuccessfully applied, in this life. When we ponder the wonder and glory of the revelation God has made of Himself in the Gospel of His Son—when we think of all the tender and sacred appeals His love and His sorrow and His death have made to the sinner, when we remember these have been accompanied by the secret pleading and striving of the Holy Spirit, when we add to these supreme ministries of grace the warnings, the lessons, the rebukes, the chastisements, the mercies, all of which have fallen in vain on the obdurate heart, it is certainly beyond the compass of the reason to imagine that even God Himself could do more to win the sinner to Himself than He has already done here. If Christ Jesus, in the infinite pity and love and sorrow of His Cross, fails to touch the impenitent and rebellious will here, is it likely He will

succeed there? There seems but one reply that can be made to this question. Scripture itself gives it; and if we were now asking what Scripture says, it would be sufficient to quote the solemn words, 'There remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries';\* but confining ourselves solely to the verdict of the reason, it seems indisputable that the heart which has resisted the love of Christ in this world will go on to resist it in the next. The possibilities of sin are incalculable, and among the most certain and terrible results of continued sin is a heart that has become 'past feeling.'

Once more, it may be urged that even if the appeals of the love and grace of God fail to awaken the impenitent, it is possible that the pain and misery of the punishment God will inflict on the rebellious sinner may at length quicken his better nature, and so punishment itself may end in the reformation and restoration of the lost. The remedial and disciplinary effects of punishment are a favourite theme with those writers who advocate the final salvation of all men, but after the most patient

\* Heb. x. 26, 27.

consideration of all that has been said on the reformatory value of the punishment of sin, I confess I am unable to see any evidence wide enough and strong enough to enable us to build any substantial hope of amendment upon it. Certainly the evidence afforded *by our experience here*, as in the results of prison discipline, and the failure of even continued imprisonment to alter the criminal who suffers it, affords us but little ground for any belief in the remedial effects of punishment as such. Indeed, the evidence goes in the opposite direction, for instead of repeated penalties for crime ending in the reformation of the criminal, they seem to have, at all events in the great majority of cases, a directly opposite effect. They harden and brutalize the offender, and there are no cases among our criminal population more utterly hopeless than those which have spent the greater proportion of their time in gaol. So, too, the experience that is afforded by the outbreak of pestilence and famine—to be regarded surely as disciplinary scourges from God—does not lead to the belief that suffering leads to repentance and reformation of life. The state of morals in a great city during the ravages of a plague such as that which visited London in the reign of Charles II.,

or the moral effects of a siege such as Paris endured a few years ago from the German army, do not certainly afford much evidence in support of the remedial effects of suffering. In addition to this, there are very few who have not known of cases of prolonged physical suffering which, instead of softening the heart, has hardened and embittered it against God. We read in the Book of the Revelation that on the outpouring of the fourth and fifth 'bowls' of 'the wrath of God,' 'men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of the God which hath the power over these plagues, and they repented not to give Him glory,' and others 'gnawed their tongues for pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they repented not of their works.'\*

So far then as the reason is concerned, it gives us little or no hope that the finally impenitent will ever turn to God in repentance and faith.

There remains, therefore, only the second alternative, that God Himself will exert the omnipotence of His grace, and overpower the rebellion of the will, and so reduce it to submission. The supposition needs only to be stated to refute itself. It is inconceivable on

\* Rev. xvi. 9, 10.

moral grounds that God should coerce the freedom with which He has endowed His own creature, for such coercion would defeat the very end it was intended to secure. Compulsory goodness ceases to be goodness, for it means the conscience and the will sent into penal servitude for life. God could enter any soul He has made; this hardly needs to be said; but if God were to enter a soul against its will, He would enter not a soul, but a ruin.

The second and only remaining alternative is therefore at once to be set on one side as impossible. The sovereign freedom of the will, howsoever it may have been impaired and injured by successive generations of sin, still remains the key to our personality and character, and the eternal God Himself, having in His own infinite will the power and secret of all freedom, will never cease to respect the freedom with which He has crowned man.

We see, therefore, that on the one side the verdict of the reason seems conclusively to point to the endlessness of sin and of its consequent punishment. I suppose it was the consciousness of the force of arguments similar to those on which I have been dwelling which accounts for the fact that some of the most earnest and distinguished advocates of the



‘larger hope,’ men like the late Mr. Baldwin Brown and Archdeacon Farrar, have steadily refused to commit themselves to a dogmatic assertion of universalism. Archdeacon Farrar, indeed, expressly repudiates the doctrine. He says, ‘I am not a universalist,’\* ‘I cannot preach the certainty of universalism,’† and in the preface to his remarkable work, ‘Eternal Hope,’ he says: ‘However deep may be our desire that this (the final restoration of the impenitent) should be the will of God; however beautifully it may accord both with His mercy and His justice, that sin, after bringing its own punishment, should be turned to holiness, and so forgiven; however much we may cling to the hope that some such meaning may underlie the broad and boundless promises of a future restitution, I dare not lay down any dogma of universalism, partly because it is not clearly revealed to us, and partly because it is impossible for us to estimate the hardening effect of obstinate persistence in evil, and the power of the human will to resist the law and to reject the love of God.’‡ The verdict of the reason, therefore, on this side of the evidence seems to lean strongly towards the orthodox

\* ‘Eternal Hope,’ p. 86, note. † *Ibid.*, p. 84.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. xvi, preface. ;



view of the eternal duration of sin and of its punishment.

This, however, is not the only word reason has to utter on this solemn subject, for as we more closely interrogate it, reason has another answer to give to the question of the doom of the lost, and, strange to say, discloses to us in this reply an apparent contradiction to its former one, precisely similar to that we found in the teaching of Holy Scripture.

Reason, in one word, has another verdict to give. It is impossible—let me say this frankly, and without any uncertainty as to my meaning—for the reason to conceive of a Kingdom of perfect righteousness and holiness and love tolerating for ever another kingdom of sin and guilt and suffering. I cannot so much as think the existence of eternal sin and eternal punishment side by side with eternal love and goodness and truth. I venture with all humility, and a deep regard for the convictions of those who feel shut up to the belief in ‘eternal punishment,’ to ask them whether they have ever seriously imagined what eternity would be if all through its endless ages they were to know that there was one part of the universe of God where God Himself was hated and dishonoured, His holy law disobeyed, and where

creatures, once made in His own image, were suffering eternal and inconceivable pain. It is possible that they might bear the thought of everlasting pain—although I doubt even this; but is it possible to tolerate the overwhelming woe of ‘eternal sin’? I know that our Lord used these words, and I have expressly quoted them when dealing with the evidence of Scripture on this subject; but if anyone asserts that because Christ used them we are bound to accept the fact, I answer that we have also seen that both our Lord and Scripture seem to look forward to another and far different consummation of the future of creation, when it shall all be ‘reconciled’ unto God. At this moment, however, we are dealing, not with Scripture, but with reason, and I ask again, Can the reason calmly and deliberately state to itself, as a credible fact; the existence through all eternity of sin in the kingdom of the Holy and ever Blessed God? I do not say, for I do not like the expression, that in this case God would suffer defeat, for God can never be defeated, and His ‘counsel standeth fast for ever and ever’; but I do say that if I believed this I should find it very hard to understand how Christ would ‘see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.’ When

Mr. Spurgeon, whose name I never mention without reverence and gratitude for all the great work God enabled him to do, said in one of his sermons,\* ‘Thou wilt look up there on the throne of God, and it shall be written, “For ever!” When the damned jingle the burning irons of their torments they shall say, “For ever!” When they howl, echo cries, “For ever!”’

“For ever” is written on their racks,  
“For ever” on their chains,  
“For ever” burneth in the fire,  
“For ever” ever reigns’—

I have no doubt he heartily and honestly believed every word he was saying; but I have equally little doubt that to many devout and earnest Christians, as loyal as Mr. Spurgeon himself to the authority of Christ and of His Word, such a conception of the eternal future of the lost is simply impossible. I repeat it, that even if the thought of the endless suffering of the lost were tolerable to the reason and heart, even if there were means of reconciling eternal pain with the infinite love of God, we have not yet faced the deepest and most insoluble mystery of the future of sin. It has, indeed, been said that the difficulty of eternal

\* Quoted by Farrar, preface to ‘Eternal Hope,’ p. li.

punishment is lessened, even if it does not altogether vanish, when we remember it is only because sin endures that punishment endures ; but it is just this last fact which contains the whole substance of the awful problem. Can the reason conceive of sin never ceasing out of the universe of God ? Is God never again to look down on a world He has made, and never again the words to be true, ' Behold, it was very good ' ?

For myself—and I hardly need say I desire to commit no one but myself to this statement — I have but one reply to make to the question : I cannot think it ; I cannot believe it.

We are therefore, at last, landed by the reason itself in what seems a hopeless contradiction. Scripture spoke with what seemed a double voice on this solemn question ; reason itself speaks, just as Scripture had spoken, and gives a double and apparently contradictory answer to our inquiry. On the one hand, it discloses no valid ground for belief in the reformation and salvation of those who have died in wilful rejection of Christ and of His offered mercy, but it points not indistinctly to the opposite conclusion ; on the other, it is equally unable to conceive of eternal sin and ex-

ternal pain in the kingdom of the everlasting God.

In our next chapter we shall endeavour to ascertain the reason for, and the meaning of, this double voice both of Scripture and of reason.

### III.

#### THE EXPLANATION OF THE ANTINOMY.

IN the two previous chapters we have examined the teaching of Scripture and the evidence of the reason so far as they touch the solemn question of the future punishment of sin, and we have found that in each case we are conducted to what appears to be an insoluble contradiction. Scripture speaks, as it seems, with a double voice, and may be quoted with equal justice both by those who affirm the endlessness of the punishment of sin, and the consequent hopelessness of the doom of the lost, and by those who deny the eternity of sin, and who maintain that all the lost will finally be restored to the love and benediction of God. Nor has the reason any clearer deliverance to make, for it also speaks in contradictory tones on the same subject, and finds it equally impossible either to deny or to affirm the eternity of sin and of its future penalty.

Now, at first sight, it may seem that this antinomy in the teaching of Scripture, and in the verdict of the reason, is both disappointing and confusing, and leads us to doubt whether we have rightly interpreted the evidence they have to give, or, if we have, whether it is of any use to pursue any further a subject encompassed with such hopeless contradictions. Instead, however, of these apparently contradictory utterances of Holy Scripture—and the same thing is equally true of the less authoritative deliverances of the reason—being any proof that we have mistaken its real teaching, or being any discouragement to our inquiry, they are, as I now propose to show, a sure indication that, in this mysterious question of the end of evil, we have reached one of those ultimate truths the full comprehension of which is not only wholly beyond our present capacities and powers, but which, just because it is an ultimate truth, can only be stated in terms which seem to involve an apparent contradiction.

Let us consider this last point first of all. It may be stated thus: All ultimate truth is the union of two apparently contradictory truths, although how they can be united is utterly inconceivable by us. A very few illus-



trations will help to make this plain. Take the conception of cause as a first illustration. I have the idea of cause; I cannot help believing that everything which happens must have had a cause, and to this law there can be no exception whatever. I may not be able to discover what is the cause of any particular event, and still less may I be able to perceive how any cause acts in producing its effect, but that every event has had some cause adequate to produce it, I am certain. This is one side of the truth, one part of my essential belief in causation. When, however, I turn within my own mind, I am confronted at once by another truth that is wholly inconsistent with the former one. I am conscious of certain movements of my will, of a power that is wholly original and uncaused—that is, of something within myself that is not a link in the unbroken chain of cause and effect, but is itself a new cause, and is wholly undetermined by any necessity outside of itself. Here, then, I am at once brought into the presence of what appears an absolute contradiction. Reason declares that every event must have a cause, and then, with equal emphasis, it affirms that my actions have no cause save in my own will, which is itself undetermined by any external

cause. To use the words of the late Canon Mozley : 'However reason may declare for the originality of our acts, it says also that every event must have a cause. Again, however it may declare for a cause of every event, it says our acts are original.'\*

Or consider, as a second illustration, the simpler experience, of which every man is conscious, of the union in his own nature of body and of spirit. Our own being, familiar as it is to us, is itself made up of an insoluble mystery. On the one hand, we are certainly material, for we have bodies ; whilst, on the other hand, we are as certainly spiritual, for we have souls ; but how these two opposing substances are united in the single personality we call our own is utterly beyond our powers to conceive. The passage from matter to spirit, as Professor Huxley somewhere says, is 'unthinkable.' We only know that powerless as we are to unite, even in thought, these opposite realities, they are united, and in our own personal being.

Nor is this contradictory verdict of the reason confined to the two instances just cited. Mr. Herbert Spencer, in his 'First Principles,' has shown that what he calls 'ultimate scientific

\* 'Predestination,' by J. B. Mozley, D.D., p. 24.

ideas' are at once inconsistent with themselves, and 'unthinkable.' 'Space, time, matter, motion, force, and so forth,' to quote Mr. Balfour's words, 'are each in turn shown to involve contradictions which it is beyond our power to solve, and obscurities which it is beyond our power to penetrate.'\* And, curiously enough, each one of these 'ultimate scientific ideas' is made up—so far as it can be stated by us in terms of the reason—of two apparently contradictory truths. 'All efforts,' Mr. Spencer says of our attempt to understand the essential nature of motion, 'do but bring us to alternative impossibilities of thought,'† and the same thing is just as true of time and of space, and of substance and force, and, indeed, of the whole cycle of the ultimate truths of science.

It is quite true that Mr. Spencer proceeds to draw from this undoubted fact an inference as to the limits of the knowable and unknowable which lies at the basis of all his philosophy; but the legitimacy or otherwise of this inference does not concern me here. I am only interested in pointing out, on so high an authority as that of Mr. Spencer,

\* 'The Foundations of Belief,' by the Right. Hon. A. J. Balfour, M.P., p. 284.

† 'First Principles,' p. 38.

that all final scientific truths—‘ultimate scientific ideas,’ as he calls them—are made up of apparently insoluble contradictions, and are ‘unthinkable’ by us.

We ought not, therefore, to be surprised if we find that the ‘ultimate ideas’ of theology, or, as I prefer to say, the ultimate truths of revelation, are equally ‘unthinkable,’ and are made up also of two apparently contradictory truths. And this, as a matter of fact, is the case with all the final truths of the Christian revelation, as will be seen if we examine for a few moments some of the great verities of the Christian faith.

The central truth of the Person of Christ may serve as a first example. Here we are met, just as we were met in the problem of the end of evil, by two apparently contradictory sets of texts in the teaching of Scripture. On the one hand there are a large number of passages which unequivocally declare our Lord to be the ‘Son of God,’ possessed of the nature and attributes, exercising the authority, and receiving the worship, of God Himself; on the other hand, there is an equal number of passages which just as plainly assert the true humanity of Christ, and insist on His being the ‘Son of man,’ possessed of the nature, and

sharing the weakness and the temptations of man. Here, in the supreme truth of the person of Christ, we are confronted by what looks like a hopeless and insoluble contradiction; and the ultimate reconciliation of these apparently opposing truths is hopelessly beyond our powers. We can form no conception of the union of the infinite and the finite in the person of our Lord; we have to confess that this 'ultimate truth' is utterly 'unthinkable' by us. The truth concerning the person of Christ, however, although inconceivable by us, is made up of these two clashing and apparently opposing truths; and it has been the mark of the Catholic faith in every age neither to deny the one nor the other side of the opposing truths, but to hold with equal firmness the Divinity and the humanity, the infinity and the finiteness, of the person of our Lord, just as it has been the unfailing mark of heresy to isolate one or the other of these truths, and either to affirm the Divinity of Christ whilst denying His humanity, or to affirm His humanity whilst denying His Divinity.

Or, consider the doctrine of 'grace,' and here, too, we shall find a precisely similar contradiction in the teaching of Scripture, whilst the 'ultimate truth' uniting the opposing truths is wholly beyond our powers to grasp.

The Calvinist, on the one hand, is able to quote from Scripture a large number of texts which assert, unmistakably and plainly, what he means by 'the sovereignty of God,' which declare that all that is good in man is the direct result of the operation of the Spirit of God, and that all that is evil in man is the equally direct result of his own rebellion against God; and, in addition to this, he can cite a large body of passages which seem to support his own doctrine of 'Election,' and to declare that there is an unrevealed mystery in the free choice of God of some to salvation, whilst others are passed over as 'vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction.' The Arminian, on the other hand, is just as able to point to an equally large number of passages which declare the universal love of God, which appeal to the freedom of man, and assert his responsibility for the acceptance or the refusal of the offer of the salvation of God, and which make the final decision rest with man, and not in the unfathomable counsel of God. Is it to be wondered at, after what has been said, that the controversy between the Calvinist and the Arminian was never really finally settled, and that, if it has died down in our own age, it has not been because either side has been vanquished, but because both have been exhausted



by a controversy that was in its very nature interminable? Each side was mainly right in what it affirmed; each side was wrong in what it denied. The Calvinist was right—wholly right—in appealing to Scripture for his characteristic doctrine of ‘Grace,’ and so long as he contented himself with affirming that all that was good in man was due to God, he occupied an inexpugnable position, the truth of which was witnessed to by every believing soul; and the Arminian was right—wholly right—in declaring that Scripture unmistakably threw the entire responsibility for faith or unbelief on the individual soul, and that the offer of mercy in Christ to all the race was a genuine one, involving the ability to accept or to refuse it. The reconciliation of the sovereignty of God with the freedom of man is an ultimate truth, wholly beyond the compass of our present powers, and all we can do is to hold firmly each side of the two apparently opposing and contradictory truths of which it is made up.

So, too, the great question of the inspiration of Scripture is another illustration of the same antinomy. Here, again, we are confronted by two truths, the reconciliation of which we are utterly unable to accomplish. On the one hand, Scripture plainly witnesses to its Divine



origin, and the witness is echoed in, and attested by, every devout soul. In some sense, God is the Author of Scripture as He is the Author of no other book in the world, and it has therefore a unique and supreme authority over every Christian heart. On the other, the Bible as plainly witnesses, both by its express statements and by the implications and phenomena of its own structure, to its human origin. It declares 'holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' and it presents to us all the usual accompaniments of human handiwork—the verbal inaccuracies, the literary characteristics, of its several authors—and it may even be said its human origin may be seen in those occasional mistakes, which are inseparable from even the most painstaking and trustworthy authorship by man. What are we, then, to believe the Bible is? Are we to shut our eyes to either side of the composite problem, and to affirm that the Book is so completely God's as virtually to annihilate the human workmanship, which is what the theory of verbal inspiration practically does; or are we to deny the Divine authorship, and to reduce the Bible to the level—even if it be a high level—of the literature of the other religions of the world, and to

see in it the highest product of the religious consciousness of man moving upwards to God? To do either of these things would be to fall into the error against which I am desirous of guarding my readers. The true view of the Bible is not to be found in ignoring either side of these antagonistic truths, but in firmly holding them both; and although their reconciliation be a task beyond our powers, we may be sure that here, as everywhere else, the ultimate truth is made up of these apparently opposing truths.

Or to take one last illustration of the same truth. In these chapters we are considering the end of sin, and the bearing of these inquiries on the subject under discussion will be considered shortly. But it ought not to be forgotten that the future of evil is not the only mystery, not the only insoluble problem, connected with evil. The beginning of sin is just as great a mystery, and we are involved at once in a hopeless antinomy when we endeavour to ascertain what is the teaching of Scripture on the subject. I do not now refer to the 'origin of evil' in the first sin; I refer rather to the beginnings of sin in each individual human life, and here, according to Scripture, we find two different, and, to our limited

powers, utterly irreconcilable, explanations given of it. For, on the one hand, sin is traced back beyond the individual to Adam, and there is one remarkable chapter, not to mention other texts, which seems to explain the existence of all the sin of the world by the sin of the first parent of the race; whilst, on the other hand, there are numberless passages which charge upon each individual man the sole responsibility and guilt of his transgression against God. When I read the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, I seem to be told that Adam was responsible for the present moral condition of the race, 'dead in trespasses and in sins'; whereas when I read the third chapter in the same Epistle, I am made to feel just as keenly that each man is solely accountable, and justly accountable, for his wickedness before God. How am I to reconcile these contradictory truths? I cannot. The origin of sin is an 'ultimate truth' that I have no means of apprehending, and all that I can do is to hold both sides of the apparently opposing truths, through which alone it can be stated to my intellect.

And so we might go through the whole circle of religious truth, and show how, in each instance, the moment we reach an 'ultimate

religious truth' we are in the presence of an 'unthinkable' truth, and one that can only be apprehended, even if imperfectly and dimly apprehended, by means of two apparently contradictory propositions. Just as the perfect sphere is made up of two hemispheres, the curves of which sweep away in opposite directions, but which united make the full circle of the sphere, so it is in religious truth. The last reality in every case is found in the union of two truths which seem to be, but are not really, contradictory, and it is only as we unite them in our own belief we can reach any apprehension of the ultimate truth of God.

I shall consider the application of this great law to the end of evil in my next chapter ; and I shall also endeavour to show that, instead of these two opposing voices of Holy Scripture, whenever it speaks of 'ultimate religious truth,' being an argument against the Divine inspiration of the Bible, they are really the strongest proof of its superhuman origin and wisdom.

We have, then, reached the conclusion that both Holy Scripture and the Reason speak with two apparently contradictory voices on the solemn question of the eternity of sin and of its consequent punishment, and I have endeavoured to show that this fact is an indication

that the end of evil is one of those ultimate truths of revelation the full apprehension of which lies wholly beyond our present powers, and which, because it is an 'ultimate truth,' can only be stated in the form of two propositions, which to the logical reason seem to be inconsistent with each other. We are therefore shut up to this result—that in this present life, at all events, we have not the powers which would enable us to solve the mystery of the end of the evil. Nor is this inability surprising. I have already pointed out that the origin of sin in the individual soul is a mystery, and the same thing may be said of the greater problem of the origin of evil in the universe of God. It has been likened to a granite wall running round the world, against which a man may dash his brains out in the vain endeavour to penetrate it, but through which no human intellect has ever pierced. Now, if the beginning of evil is an insoluble mystery—as it is admitted on all sides to be—it is not wonderful that the end of evil should be an equal mystery, and that in contemplating or discussing it we can only humbly confess the impotence of our powers, and leave the whole matter in the hands of the infinite and most holy God.

I referred in an earlier paper of this series to

a little work, not perhaps as well known as it deserves to be, by Dr. Clemance, entitled 'Future Punishment,' and although Dr. Clemance reaches his conclusion by a very different road from the one on which we have travelled, it is noteworthy, I think, that he has come practically to the same conclusion as the one just stated. Here are Dr. Clemance's own words: 'In Scripture the duration of future punishment is left indefinite; no limit is shown to us. If there be a limit to it, it is still a secret in the mind of God, and He will do what is right. God has not revealed an end; that is to us perfectly clear. But because God has not revealed an end, do not let us take it upon ourselves to say there never, never will be an end to it. So far we could never go. We deem those extremely rash—we contend that they go beyond Scripture—who affirm that punishment will last through *all* the ages. Scripture nowhere affirms this, and in place, therefore, of the hard and positive affirmation of absolute endlessness, we would set this—that though we do not affirm there is no limit, we do affirm that there is no revealed limit. Whether there will be a limit or no, God alone can tell. All is in His hands, and He will do what seemeth to Him good, and what seems



good to Him seems good because it is so. There we leave the matter.’\* In a later passage in the same book Dr. Clemance sums up the teaching of Scripture thus: ‘If we affirm annihilation, we distort Scripture; if we affirm universal restoration, we oppose Scripture; if we affirm the ending of punishment, we fall short of Scripture; if we affirm its endlessness, we go beyond Scripture.’† And, again, he says: ‘As the first beginning of evil is lost from view in the concealment of the past, so its issue is hidden from view in the concealment of the future.’‡

This is really the conclusion we have reached, but before considering the effect it ought to have on our faith and preaching, there are one or two further points worthy of careful consideration.

First of all, it may be said that if it be true that Scripture leaves the end of evil in the darkness of an insoluble mystery, if it speaks on this solemn subject in words which seem to be irreconcilable with each other, it leaves us practically with no idea at all of the future punishment of sin and of the doom of the lost. But this is not so in reality. There are on the

\* ‘Future Punishment,’ pp. 62, 63. † *Ibid.*, p. 72.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 68.



one hand some truths which present themselves to the mind clearly and distinctly, and which we are able completely and adequately to grasp. The facts of perception, of our own sensations, for example, are amongst those truths which lie wholly within the compass and the competence of the human reason.

‘On the other hand,’ as the late Canon Mozley says in his work on ‘Predestination,’ ‘there are various truths which we partly conceive and partly fail in conceiving; the conception, when it has begun, does not advance or come to a natural termination, but remains a certain tendency of thought only. Such are the ideas of substance, of cause, of infinity, and others which we cannot grasp or subject to our minds, and which, when we follow them up, involve us in the utmost perplexity, and carry us into great apparent contradictions.’ (The italics are mine.) ‘These, as entertained by our minds, are incipient truths, not final or absolute ones. In following or trying to follow them we feel that we are in a certain right way, that we are going in a certain true direction of thought; but we attain no goal, and arrive at no positive apprehension.’ Thus, for instance, my idea of substance is only ‘a sort of idea of a confused something lying underneath all the sensible

qualities of matter—that is to say, beyond and outside of all my real perceptions. And I am just as incapable of forming any idea of a spiritual substance of myself, though I am said to be conscious of it, for this plain reason—that it is in its very nature anterior to all my ideas.’\*

There are a large number of these final truths in philosophy, of which we have thus only ‘a half-conception’—truths which, ‘as entertained by us, are only truths in tendency, not absolute, not complete. We are conscious of the germs of various ideas, which we cannot open out, or realize as whole or consistent ones. We feel ourselves reaching after what we cannot grasp, and moving onward in thought towards something we cannot overtake. . . . I encounter mysterious truths in philosophy before I come to them in religion, natural or revealed.’†

But this confessed inability of the human mind completely and adequately to conceive these mysterious truths, whether of philosophy or religion, is not the same thing as saying we can therefore have no idea of these truths at all. ‘It is wrong to say that we are wholly unable to entertain truths of which we have no

\* ‘Predestination,’ pp. 16, 17. † *Ibid.*, p. 20.

distinct idea, and those who suppose so have an incorrect and defective notion of the constitution of the human mind. The human mind is so constituted as to have relations to truth *without the medium of distinct ideas and conceptions*. The constitution of our minds makes this mixed state of ignorance and knowledge possible to us.\* And in a note Canon Mozley points out that both Locke and Hume 'substantially admit the class of indistinct ideas,' and he quotes the striking words of Pascal in his 'Pensées': 'Nous sommes sur un milieu vaste, toujours incertains, et flottants entre l'ignorance et la connaissance; et, si nous pensons aller plus avant, notre objet branle, et échappe à nos prises; il se dérobe, et fuit d'une fuite éternelle: rien ne peut l'arrêter.'

I have quoted these words of Dr. Mozley because they seem to me to apply to the truth we are now considering—the end of evil, and the consequent doom of the lost. It is true that we have no powers to form any clear and adequate conception of this mysterious subject; it is not true that therefore we can form no idea of it all, and that all we can do is to dismiss it from our minds as lying wholly outside of or beyond the subjects of our thought.

\* 'Predestination,' p. 21.

We may have ideas, even if they are indistinct and inadequate, of things we cannot wholly grasp in our minds. We have no right to put aside the solemn and awful question of the end of evil on the plea that we cannot completely fathom the mystery. We cannot form any consistent or clear conception either of material or of spiritual substance, or of power, or of cause, or of infinity, and yet we believe in each one of these mysterious truths. And in like manner we cannot form any consistent or clear conception of the great truths of revelation, the beginning of sin in the individual soul, the Person of Christ, the relation of the grace of God to the freedom of man, the Divine and the human elements in the Bible—and yet we are conscious of believing each one of these truths, of knowing more about them than we could put into words. It is exactly so with the question of the end of evil. It is a final mystery, and revelation itself does not solve the mystery for us, because it lies beyond our present capacities and powers; but none the less we are capable of entertaining some part of the truth, of forming some dim and imperfect conception of the mystery. We are not left in total darkness, even if there is not perfect light.

It is in its treatment of these ultimate truths

of revelation that the Divine wisdom of Scripture is seen, especially when we contrast it with rival theological systems which have been founded on the one or the other of the apparently conflicting and irreconcilable statements of Scripture. The Bible makes no attempt to be consistent with itself in the presentation of these ultimate realities of revelation. Take the doctrine of Predestination as an illustration of this point. 'Scripture,' Canon Mozley justly says in the work from which I have already quoted, 'is two-sided on this great question. If one set of passages, taken in their natural meaning, conveys the doctrine of predestination, another conveys the reverse. . . . So that sometimes speaking one way, and sometimes another, Scripture, as a whole, makes no assertion, or has no determinate doctrine on this subject.'\*

Nor is this apparent inconsistency of Scripture with itself any real ground of objection to Scripture; it is, rather, a reason for admiring its wisdom and depth. 'Were the nature of all truth such as that it could be expressed—that is, put into statement or proposition, to the effect that such is, or is not the case—explicitness and consistency would always be

\* 'Predestination,' p. 36.

requisite for language, because real expression is necessarily explicit and consistent with itself. All intelligible truths—matters of fact, for example—are capable of expression, and therefore, in the case of such truths, explicit statement is necessary, and contradiction is ruinous. But it is not the case that all truth *can* be expressed. Some truths of revealed religion cannot be stated without contradiction.’\*

And of these truths which cannot be explicitly stated, the only way in which Scripture can lodge them at all in our mind is by the use of apparently ‘contradictory or double language. Consistent language would do more than, indeed the very reverse of, what was wanted, inasmuch as it would state positively. Inconsistency would certainly be avoided by saying nothing at all, but that mode of avoiding inconsistency could not be adopted because there is a defective and incomplete truth to be expressed in some such way as is practicable. Something, therefore, is to be said. But to say something, and yet on the whole to make no positive statement, to express suitably such indeterminate truth, what is to be done *but first to assert the truth and then by counter-statement to bring round indefiniteness again, thus carrying*

\* ‘Predestination,’ p. 36.



*thought a certain way without bringing it to any goal, and giving an inclination and direction to ideas without fixing them ?*\*

These profound words apply in all their force to the doctrine we have been considering. If the end of evil is one of those last mysteries of revelation which we cannot grasp in our minds, one of those ultimate truths the full apprehension of which lies wholly beyond our present powers, then logical and consistent statement on either side would have been misleading and untrue. Such truths can only be imperfectly apprehended, and the only way in which the Bible can tell us anything at all about them is by a series of counter-statements, apparently, but not really, inconsistent with each other, and which are contradictory only because their final unity lies beyond the present capacity of the human reason.

But then, it may be asked, if no definite and clear conception can be formed of the end of evil, if we are not allowed dogmatically to affirm or to deny the endlessness of sin and of its consequent punishment, how is this to affect our faith, and especially our preaching? I answer that at least it is certain Scripture means what it says, and that if it seems to hold

\* 'Predestination,' pp. 36, 37.



out no hope for those who here wilfully reject the offer of mercy in Christ, if it speaks in all possible variety of language—as it does—of the tremendous and inconceivable woe which falls on all who die finally impenitent and unsaved, if even our Lord Himself, the tenderest and most compassionate of Teachers, spoke often, perhaps more often than of any other single subject in His ministry, of ‘the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched,’ of ‘the weeping and gnashing of teeth,’ which would be the awful doom of those who were condemned at the last day, then it is at our peril we lessen even by one word the gravity and solemnity of those statements of Scripture. Nor will it avail to plead that on the other side there are countervailing statements which seem to point to the final restoration of all the lost to the love and authority of God. There are, as we have already seen, two sides to the teaching of Scripture on the end of evil; but there is only one side to the preaching which is intrusted to us, and to which we are unfaithful at our peril. There is no single instance in the New Testament, either in the public ministry of our Lord or in the preaching of His Apostles, of the lessening of the urgency of the plea made to sinful men by the con-

sideration of the possible end of evil in the final salvation of all the lost. On the contrary, the words of Christ and the words of His Apostles are full of intense and yearning entreaty, of solemn and reiterated warning, of almost passionate appeal to those who heard them to be 'reconciled to God.' Not once in the ministry of the Gospel are the shadows which gather over the final condemnation of the unsaved lightened by the prospect of 'eternal hope.' Not once does the voice of the ambassador hesitate and pause in its offer of mercy to all, or in its warning of inconceivable woe which should come on all who heard the offer and deliberately rejected it; not once does he remind those who listened there was a brighter side to the Gospel of the love of God, and that even if men died finally impenitent there was still room for hope for them. The antinomies of the teaching of Scripture never affected the preaching either of Christ or of His Apostles. Jesus Himself uttered the most terrible words of woe to the wicked the New Testament contains, and the Apostles spoke but one message to all who heard them, a message of mingled mercy and warning, in which the light of the love of God was seen ever shining, but beyond it was the dark

thunder-cloud of the 'wrath to come.' I should have to quote too many texts if I desired to adduce the whole of the evidence which would verify this statement. Let any reader carefully study the words of Christ, and the preaching of the Apostles, and the whole tone and urgency of their Apostolic work, and I am convinced he will come away from such a study impressed with the conviction that any preaching that leaves out of its message the note of warning, that is wholly silent on that 'certain fearful expectation of judgment and fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries,'\* is not—whatsoever else it may be—the preaching of the New Testament.

In saying this I am not attempting to bring back, in preaching, a doctrine of the endlessness of sin and of its punishment, which we have seen goes as far beyond the teaching of Scripture on the one side, as the dogmatic assertion of universalism does in the opposite direction. All I am urging is that we cannot be faithful to the trust committed to us if we omit either from our faith or our preaching the solemn warnings of the New Testament of the coming 'wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that

\* Heb. x. 27.

worketh evil.\* What is the end of it all we do not know, and cannot here know; but we do know that so terrible was the prospect of the doom of the lost even here, that Jesus Himself 'wept over the city,' and that an Apostle in writing of 'the enemies of the Cross of Christ,' and of that 'perdition' which was their 'end,' could only write of it with the hot tears of sorrow streaming down his cheeks.

I have no right to affirm that this darker and sadder side of the message of the Gospel is being suppressed in the preaching of the present day. It would be as uncharitable as untrue to charge the ministry of the Church of Christ with unfaithfulness to the 'whole counsel of God' committed to their trust; but that there is peril to us all of allowing the kindlier and more generous pity, the larger and more tolerant creeds of this age to minimize either the guilt of unbelief in the Gospel of Christ, or the gravity of the doom which will fall on those who 'obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus,' who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of His might.†

\* Rom. ii. 9.

† 2 Thess. i. 9.

That faith is nearest to the 'faith once for all delivered unto the saints,' that preaching is likest to the Apostolic message, which finds equal room in it for the Infinite Love and the Consuming Fire.

## II.

### *HEAVEN.*

#### I.

#### THE GLORY OF THE SOUL.

IN endeavouring to form any conception of the glory of the redeemed in Heaven, the first place would naturally be given to a consideration of the glorified body which will be the eternal possession of all who are partakers of the Divine life in Christ. In two previous chapters, however, we have already dwelt on the resurrection of the body, and on the nature and power of the spiritual body which will be raised from the dead at the second coming of Christ, and it is not therefore necessary to repeat what has been said on this part of my present subject. We have seen that so far from Christianity 'vilifying the body,' as has been charged against it, the Gospel of Christ associates it with the soul in the glory of Christ's redeeming

work. Here on earth it is a 'temple of the Holy Ghost,' and hereafter in heaven it will be 'fashioned' like to 'the body of the glory' of Christ, sharing the perfection and powers of Christ's own body. The Christian doctrine of the resurrection, moreover, is necessary to the completion and perfecting of humanity, for without it one part of our present complex nature would have no part in the redemption of Christ. In 'the glory which is to be revealed' the body is to have its share.

I pass now to consider the higher elements in the glory of heaven, and of these the first great feature will be the glorification of the soul, meaning by the 'soul' the intellectual and emotional nature of man. Although I use the term 'soul' thus to denote the rational as distinct from the spiritual elements in man, I do not wish to imply that the popular division of human nature into body, soul and spirit, as if in the single personality of man there was a trinity of separate natures, has any foundation in fact. There are, in reality, only two distinct elements in the compound being of man—he is made up of body and of soul, the body linking him with the material world and with the lower creation, the soul uniting him with the spiritual world and with God. But the soul has both a lower and a



higher range of powers and of activities. On the one hand it is the principle of animal life, the source of the appetites and desires and impulses of that life, and the seat of the intellectual and emotional nature of man; whilst on the other hand, in its higher manifestations, it is described as 'spirit,' the inmost centre of human personality, the abode of the conscience and of the will, and that side of man's nature which holds fellowship with God. 'The distinction of "soul" and "spirit,"' as Dr. Orr says in his great work on 'The Christian View of God and of the World,'\* 'is a distinction within the one indivisible spiritual nature: and the antithesis "soul" and "body" really covers all the facts of man's personal life.'

With this understanding we shall confine ourselves to the glorification of that lower side of our spiritual nature which perceives, observes, knows, imagines, remembers, feels, desires, hopes, and fears.

What, then, will be the future of the glorified soul in the eternal world?

1. The first element in the glory of the soul will be its capacity for, and realization of, indefinite intellectual advancement.

It is quite true that there are some earnest

\* Page 163.

and devout Christians to whom the intellectual glory of the redeemed in heaven makes but a feeble and distant appeal. Too often the reason is spoken of in terms which would lead one to suppose that instead of its being one of God's most precious gifts to man, it is a fruitful source of peril, and especially of unbelief, and ought therefore to be regarded with suspicion and even with dislike. It seems to be forgotten that if the reason does sometimes, and when wrongly used, lead to unbelief, on the other hand, without it there could be no intelligent faith in God. Scripture certainly never depreciates the intellectual side of man's nature. 'There is a spirit in man,' the old Book of Job says, 'and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding,'\* and in the higher teaching of the New Testament we are told that 'in understanding' we are to 'be men.'† 'To one,' we read, 'is given through the spirit the word of wisdom, and to another the word of knowledge through the same spirit.'‡ Genius itself is the gift of God, and those illustrious masters of thought, whose names shine like stars in the firmament above us, and whose works are among the noblest glories of the race, owe their greatness as truly to God as the sun that lights

\* Job xxxii. 8. † I Cor. xiv. 20. ‡ *Ibid.*, xii. 8.

the heavens and the earth day after day. The progress of science, the advancement of learning, the great discoveries from age to age of the human intellect, are not the work of the devil. They are from Him of whom we read that 'Every good gift and every perfect boon is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning.'\*

And as Scripture never depreciates the intellect even as we possess it now, so it predicts an immeasurable glory for it hereafter. 'Now we see in a mirror, darkly,' St. Paul says, 'but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I have been known' †—that is, for this is the meaning of St. Paul's words, here we 'see' only as it were the dim reflection of realities, 'by means of a mirror,' and therefore 'darkly,' that is, 'in a riddle,' as if all our efforts after knowledge were like guesses at the answer to some riddle nature was propounding to us. Now we know only 'in part,' partial glimpses of the truth are revealed to us, and these are only partially apprehended by us. In the eternal world we shall not see and know thus. We shall 'see face to face' with all the infinite

\* James i. 17.

† I Cor. xiii. 12.

realities of knowledge, and we shall ‘know fully and perfectly’ (this is the real meaning of the word the Apostle uses) ‘as we have been known.’ It is quite true that in the immediate reference of the word St. Paul was probably thinking of Divine knowledge alone, of the revelation of God in Christ, but as this knowledge of God necessarily embraces and involves all other knowledge, we shall not err in supposing that we have here the prophecy and the assurance of ever-growing perfection of intellectual advancement in heaven.

So, too, our Lord’s great promise to His disciples exactly corresponds with these words of St. Paul. ‘Ye shall know the truth,’\* Christ said, and I do not think we ought to limit the scope of the promise to the knowledge of religious truth. All that is included in the rich and noble kingdom of ‘truth’—all learning and science, all true philosophy and all possibilities of human knowledge—is to be the future possession of those who are ‘in Christ.’ This indeed follows—necessarily follows—from the relation Christ Himself bears to truth, and from the relation His disciples bear to Him. Truth has no existence, no reality, out of Christ. His own Divine affirmation concern-

\* John viii. 32.

ing Himself was this, 'I am the Truth,' and all human knowledge of the truth is therefore part of the infinite fulness of Christ. 'In Him all things subsist,' and truth is not the least of these 'all things,' so that every ray of intellectual light that reaches us streams from Him as its central and uncreated sun. The disciple of Christ, moreover, is in such vital union with his Lord, that all that is Christ's becomes his, and as he shares the glory of Christ's Divine nature, so he will partake of the fulness of the intellectual riches of Christ. In all the amplitude of the words it will be true of the humblest disciple, 'all things are yours, and ye are Christ's.'

I am never able to think of this aspect of the glory of heaven without fresh wonder and delight. How many of Christ's dearest friends and truest servants are poor—poor in intellect and in knowledge, as well as in material wealth, some of them, like Cowper's cottager, who, with 'little understanding, and no wit,'

'Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true'—

but in the glory hereafter these humble disciples have before them a future of intellectual advancement that we can only faintly imagine. All 'the treasures of wisdom and

knowledge' are even now in Christ; but here they are 'hidden' in Him; there they will be revealed; and part of the infinite joy of heaven will be the wealth of exhaustless knowledge that will be the portion of all who partake of 'the unsearchable riches of Christ.'

2. The soul is the seat of the imagination as well as of the reason, properly so-called, and the glorious creations of art, the mystic and entrancing delight of music, the fire that burns on the poet's tongue, are all so many witnesses to the splendour and wonder of the gifts imagination confers on the soul. I have already said that genius is the gift of God, and this is not less true of the magic of the imagination. There are a few verses in the Book of Exodus which have always seemed to me singularly suggestive as attesting the delight that even the beautiful is to God. In the erection of the tabernacle under Moses we read:\* 'The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in

\* Exod. xxxi. 1-6.



silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all manner of workmanship.' God Himself declares that the imagination of Bezaleel leading him 'to devise cunning works,' and his skill in artistic decoration, his 'work in gold, and in silver, and in brass,' the 'cutting of stones for setting,' and the 'carving of wood' were the direct result of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. All that Bezaleel produced as the fruit of his toil was not only the manifestation of the workman's skill and power; it was also the manifestation in works of human loveliness of that Divine beauty and more perfect wisdom which dwell in Him who loves to paint even the microscopic dust on the wing of a butterfly with all the splendour and radiance of the rainbow.

We may thankfully and gladly acknowledge, therefore, that although the greatest gifts God bestows may be shamefully misused, all the noble and the glorious creations of art and of music and of poetry are the revelations of the glory of God, whose Spirit inspired them. The immortal words of Dante, or Shakespeare, or Milton, the wonder and delight of the genius of Michael Angelo or Fra Angelico, or of Holman Hunt or Burne Jones, the lovely



and noble creations of architecture—‘poems in stone,’ as they have been called—the unfathomable mysteries and depths of the music of Beethoven, the pure and tender melodies which were swept from Mendelssohn’s lyre, the majestic hallelujahs of the ‘Messiah,’\* the wonder and power of all noble music, are parts of the infinite fulness and glory of God, they reveal God to the soul, and tell us how wonderful is ‘the beauty of the Lord,’ and proclaim aloud, ‘How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!’

Here on earth the greatest artists in marble and canvas, in music and song, have never really been representing their own works, but the works of God. In all her long history, I do not think Art has ever rendered one evil thing immortal. ‘One great moral truth,’ Sir Archibald Alison said many years ago at Glasgow, on the centenary of Burns’ birth, ‘I extract from the fate of Burns, and that is, that no lasting fame is to be acquired, even by the brightest genius, save that which is devoted to the purposes of virtue; for the few poems of Burns which we now lament have long since passed into oblivion, and those on which his

\* It is said that when Handel wrote the ‘Hallelujah Chorus’ he remarked, ‘Then I did think I could see all heaven before me and the great God Himself.’

immortal fame is rested are pure as the undriven snow.' These words are profoundly true, and hence it is that all the noblest monuments of art and of literature are always some dim reflections and reproductions of the pure and perfect work of God. The tender green of the spring, the pomp of the summer foliage, the glories of the autumn gold, the splendours of snow and frost, the heaving restlessness and the changing wonder of the sea, the majesty of the eternal hills, the clustered grace of the trees as they bend their branches into arches of living green, the beauty of the precious things of the mines, the sighing and sobbing of the wild wind, the glory of the ever-changing sky, the nameless wonders of dawn and of sunset, the loveliness of the human face and form, the melodies which seem to float downwards to earth from the skies, these have been the subjects on which Art has delighted to spend her richest gifts. Even when Art portrays the tragedy and the pathos of human life, its hopes and fears, its joys and sorrows, its virtues and sins, it has only touched its highest note when the deep moral significance underlying even the wickedness of man has been seen and felt. Nothing sordid, nothing impure, nothing in

itself evil, has ever been crowned with immortality by the imagination.

If Art be thus a priestess of the most high God, if she perishes the moment she prostitutes her highest powers to glorify vileness, surely we may say that all her triumphs have not been won in this world of sin and death. We may not be able perhaps to conceive of the forms the imagination will take in the eternal world, but we may none the less be sure that in the perfect life of heaven all our nature will find its completest satisfaction, and the yearning for beauty, not less than the higher yearning for truth, will be fulfilled. Goethe once said, 'The beautiful is more than good,' and although on his lips it may have meant that beauty was more than goodness unadorned, we may read a Christian meaning into the words, and thankfully believe that in the glory of heaven goodness and loveliness will be for ever one, and all that is beautiful will be good, and all that is good be beautiful.

Nor does the New Testament leave us, as I think, without some hints, howsoever obscure, of the Divine satisfactions to the imagination that Heaven will afford. The Bible begins with Paradise, it is true, but it is paradise in a garden, whilst it ends with the revelation of

the city of God. If we read those magnificent chapters which close the Apocalypse of John, and which contain the vision of 'the New Jerusalem descending out of Heaven from God'; if we mark how he delights to tell us of the streets of the city being 'pure gold, as it were transparent glass,' and of the city itself built of 'gold,' of the 'building of its wall' being 'jasper,' and of the foundations 'adorned with all manner of precious stones'; if we read of the 'voice of the great multitude' like 'the voice of many waters and the voice of many thunders' ascending in the everlasting chant before the throne of God; of the 'harpers harping with their harps,' and 'singing the new song'; of the 'glassy sea like unto crystal'; of 'the river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb'; of the 'kings of the earth' bringing 'their glory' into the city of God, we shall not find it easy to dismiss all this wealth of glowing symbol as metaphors of nothing, but even though the spiritual glory of Heaven be the highest reality thus shadowed forth to us, we shall find room for that vision of beauty which will delight us in the city of God on high.

3. The intellect and the imagination, however, are not the only faculties of the soul which will

find perfect satisfaction in the eternal world. The soul is the organ of feeling, and, although many of the purest pleasures of emotion are directly associated with the reason and the imagination, the discoveries of science, for instance, being always associated with emotional as well as intellectual satisfaction, yet it is well for us to remember that feeling in the purest and deepest sense will only find its perfect fruition and happiness in Heaven.

Love is the crown of all feeling, and as it is the source of the most exquisite joy earth affords, so it is also the cause of some of its keenest sorrows as well. It is never absolutely satisfied, even when the cup is fullest, in this mortal life. How often love lies torn and bleeding by cruel wounds, and eyes which were meant to smile are turned into fountains of tears! Life is full of the sorrows of love, as well as of its joys. There are disappointments and disenchantments of affection; there are separations, sometimes by removal, sometimes by death, sometimes by the sudden death of the heart; there are comings and goings and partings, and even when the sky is without a cloud, no one can tell how long the sunshine will last. Over all life's purest joys hangs the shadow of death, and sometimes, alas, hearts

which were meant to love are the homes of unkindness and bitterness of feeling, and there are hatred and variance and jealousy, and even among the children of the same God there is too often alienation or coldness of heart. There is no perfectness in human love on earth, no certainty that the fountain of affection, flowing full to-day, may not begin to shrink and to dry up to-morrow.

In the glorious and unending life of Heaven love itself will at last be satisfied. I say nothing here of that love to God which will for the first time be completely and fully realized, for this will more properly come to be considered under the spiritual joys of the redeemed, but the lower human affection will also there be perfected and glorified. We shall not only 'know as we have been known,' but we shall love as we are loved. In the eternal world life and love will be one. The closing chapters of the Book of the Revelation dwell with sweet iteration on the things which are 'no more' in Heaven. 'The sea,' symbol of earthly separation and of peril, is 'no more'; 'death' is 'no more'; 'mourning,' 'crying,' 'pain,' all are 'no more'; 'night' is not there, and 'there shall be no curse any more,' for as the body will be incapable of pain, so the soul shall be inviolate by

grief, but love, this wonderful human love of ours that makes even this life radiant with gladness, remains. 'Love never faileth,' and the full meaning of those words will never be seen till we stand in the light of God in Heaven.



## II.

### THE GLORY OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

IN attempting to form some conception of the glory of Heaven we have already dwelt on the glorification of the body and of the soul, the perfecting of the physical and the rational nature of man, which will be part of the great reward reserved for those who are eternally saved. The 'redemption of the body' and the glory of the soul are, however, quite subordinate elements in the felicity of Heaven, for it is in the glorifying of the human spirit by its assimilation to the likeness, and its participation in the bliss, of the Eternal God that the supreme joy of the redeemed consists. It remains for us, therefore, in this concluding chapter to endeavour to gather together the various and scattered hints which Scripture affords of this last and crowning bliss of Heaven.

I. And, first of all, it is certain that there will be no sin in Heaven. It is hardly neces-

sary to quote any Scriptures in support of this statement, for even if the Bible said nothing of the absence of sin and moral imperfection in the future life, our own conscience would demand it. It is impossible, as we have already seen, to conceive of God creating and tolerating a world in which sin, with all its attendant miseries and guilt, should exist throughout eternity. The Bible, however, meets the longing of the heart for a life that shall be absolutely sinless by the assurance that into the city of God on high 'there shall in nowise enter anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie,'\* and inasmuch as a large part of the sorrow and suffering of life is directly or indirectly the result of sin, either our own sin or that of others, with the absence of all sin there will also come the complete absence of all sorrow in the heavenly state. 'God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes'; neither 'shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more,'† or, as Richard Baxter says in his 'Saint's Rest,' 'a gale of groans and sighs, a stream of tears, accompanies us to the very gates, and there bids us farewell for ever.‡

I do not profess to be able completely to explain how death will thus liberate the redeemed

\* Rev. xxi. 27. † *Ibid.*, xxi. 4. ‡ 'Saint's Rest,' p. 25.

soul from all the imperfections and sins of earth. Certainly it will not be by the merely physical dissolution of the body that this great miracle of grace is wrought, nor is it of any importance we should be able to comprehend the process when the result is the chief thing that concerns us. The first element in the overpowering bliss of Heaven will be the thought flooding the heart with unspeakable peace and joy that the last temptation and the last sin have for ever been left behind. This life on earth is one of continual temptation and continual peril ; we are never really safe for a single day from the assaults of evil. Sometimes we conquer in the fight ; sometimes we are like sentries that go to sleep at their posts, and the foe steals in before we are aware he is near ; sometimes we are altogether defeated, and we fall before temptation and sin against God, and then there comes the cloud of God's displeasure, and the misery of an angry conscience, and all the light is gone out of our life.

This condition of probation and temptation and peril and sin is not to last for ever. It ends with death, and when the perfected spirit, joined to the glorified body, enters the final glory of Heaven, it will be conscious of being as free from sin as Christ Jesus Himself. ' We

shall be like Him,' in this respect, as in all others, that as He is 'separate from sinners,' as He 'knew no sin,' so shall we be separate, and for the first time be able to look within the secret places of our own hearts and to find nothing there displeasing to God. I do not say, for I do not think, that we shall ever be in Heaven as if we had never sinned. 'The Lamb as it had been slain,' whom St. John saw 'standing in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders,'\* will ever be there to remind us of the infinite Love and the infinite Sacrifice through which we have reached that perfect life; but the memory will have no bitterness, for the sting of sin will have been plucked out, and the soul will be like a polished mirror, without stain or flaw, in which God Himself shall see His own image perfectly reflected.

Nor will this unconsciousness of evil proceed, as it so often does in this life, from the imperfection and deadness of the conscience; the secret impurity being unknown, not because there is none, but because of the defectiveness of the inward vision, or from lack of insufficient light shining within. The conscience itself of the glorified will be as sensitive to evil as the

\* Rev. v. 6.

conscience of the man Christ Jesus ; it will be as quick to respond to the touch of God as the strings of some perfect instrument are to the hand of the master ; it will be as true to God as the trembling needle ever turning to the pole ; it will, in a word, no longer be the uncertain and feeble echo of the voice of God sounding within, but the very voice of God Himself. And yet even this perfected conscience will find nothing wherewith to rebuke us, no cause of offence, no single imperfection still remaining in the sinless life. In the light of God above the eternal joy of the redeemed will never again know the shadow cast by sin.

2. Once again, not merely will there be a complete absence of all sin and imperfection in Heaven, but the will itself will be finally fixed in complete and utter loyalty to the will of God.

The freedom of the will—that is, its power to choose this way or that—is one of the greatest glories of man, being a part of that Divine image in which he was originally created, and yet this freedom is being continually lost. I do not mean, I hardly need say, that God invades the sanctity of human freedom, and binds in chains that sovereign power with which He once endowed man ; but

the will is ever putting itself into bondage either to good or to evil—in other words, the inevitable tendency of freedom is to pass into a state of necessity. Acts form habits, habits create character, and character becomes the permanent form which the life takes, and so out of our own freedom there issues by degrees a state in which the will becomes fixed in its final attitude to God and to goodness.

We have already alluded to the darker side of this great truth in dealing with the question of the 'doom of the lost,' and we have seen how hopeless it is to expect that a life which had hardened itself in sin, and had ended in rebellion against God, and in deliberate rejection of the mercy of God offered in Christ, would ever be changed, or could ever be changed, in a future state into an opposite attitude to God, and we have now to consider the brighter side of this great moral law of our nature. The will, as we have said, is slowly parting with its own freedom, sowing seeds which become the harvest of habits, and of habits which will in turn bear the harvest of eternal character hereafter. Now, this great law, like all the laws of God, is intended to bless us, and not to curse us, and to form one of the chief inducements to a life of goodness,



as it is one of the greatest rewards of that life hereafter. Each day's life for God that is lived on earth has an imperishable record elsewhere. Every conquest of temptation, every victory over sin, every effort after goodness, every act of obedience to conscience, is helping to bring us nearer and nearer that day when goodness shall be as habitual to the saved as wickedness is to the lost, when the will itself shall be so fixed in its relation to God that it shall be as instantly obedient to His will as the keys of the organ are to the master of the instrument, making music at his touch. Nor is it difficult to conceive of the moral possibility of such a state of habitual goodness as this, for even the limited experience of earth will be sufficient to render it credible and possible. There are some Christians, for example, who by the grace of God have so long disciplined their body, 'keeping it under,' chaining up and subduing all the grosser lusts of the flesh, that a carnal temptation is absolutely powerless over them. The citadel of the heart is impregnable to all assaults from that side. The will is, so far, unalterably fixed in goodness that almost without an effort it refuses even to listen to the seductions of the lower nature. We have only to carry the illustration into the larger region



of the spiritual life and to make it embrace, not one special class of temptations, but all temptations to sin, and we shall see at once how successive victories over sin inevitably end in a final triumph when the will itself shall no longer be assailable by evil, but shall remain finally fixed in its permanent relation of loyalty and obedience to God. In Heaven goodness will be as natural as sin is here.

And this, I suppose, is the real truth lying at the bottom of the old Calvinistic doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. I am aware that this doctrine formed a part of a great theological system, and was itself only an inference from the prior doctrine of the Election of Grace; but the actual origin of the doctrine is one thing, and the truth it enshrined, possibly in an imperfect and impossible form, is another. Beneath this old doctrine there was the great truth that it is in the very nature of all moral life to perpetuate itself, that just as evil goes on to harden itself in evil and to become habitual, so goodness tends also to become habitual, and a life of ever-growing obedience to God ends at last in a life from which no lapse into sin is possible, because the will itself has settled its own eternal attitude to God.

This is a further element of the infinite glory of Heaven, and another illustration of the meaning of the words 'We shall be like Him,' for as we cannot conceive of Christ ever falling from goodness, and we think of His Divine and human nature not only as being perfectly holy, but as sure for ever to continue so, so will the redeemed be 'like Him,' one, for ever one, with the Eternal goodness itself.

But this final fixity of the will in a permanent relation of obedience to God will not prevent an endless progress in goodness in the heavenly state, for with the understanding ever enlarging and ever perfecting its knowledge of God, the saints will be more and more filled 'to all the fulness of God.' There will be no dull stagnation of the spiritual life in Heaven. The child of God will never cease to grow because he will never cease to live. We can, perhaps, form but a poor and feeble conception of how progress can be possible without failure, without halting, without falls by the way; how life shall ever be growing in likeness to God, in adoration and obedience and service, without consciousness of imperfection, but it will be so. There will be no 'pains' of growth in Heaven, but just as the flower slowly and silently opens to the sun, unfolding more and more its perfect

beauty, and gaining a sweeter fragrance from each day, so the soul shall open itself to God, possessing more and more of His own eternal life, sharing an ever larger measure of His own nature, ever realizing the growing wonder and joy of the promise—‘Heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ.’

3. The reason and the conscience and the will, however, are not the only elements in our complex human nature which will be perfected in the glory of Heaven. The heart, the seat of all emotion, will at last be at perfect rest, enjoying the fulness of the love of God and loving Him as it has been loved. There is nothing that more marks the imperfection and sin of our present state than the coldness of our hearts to God, a coldness largely the result of our want of realization of the love of God to us. It is true that even the most unworthy Christian can say, ‘Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee’; but the best and holiest saint mourns in secret over the dryness and dulness of his heart towards God, and the poor and inadequate sense he has of the infinite love of God. There may be occasionally rare and high experiences of that Divine love granted to some elect souls who ‘walked in the light,’ so near to God that the

glory of His love transfigured all their life ; but for the most part the children of God have to confess that of all their shortcomings there is none more sorrowful and sad than their failure in love to God. In the glory of the home above love itself will be perfected. I have already quoted from Richard Baxter's 'Saint's Rest,' and I am tempted to add here one more extract, as it takes us into the heart of the bliss of the redeemed. 'Christian,' Baxter says, 'thou shalt be eternally embraced in the arms of that love which was from everlasting and will extend to everlasting, of that love which brought the Son of God's love from Heaven to earth, from earth to the Cross, from the Cross to the grave, from the grave to glory ; that love which was weary, hungry, tempted, scorned, scourged, buffeted, spit upon, crucified, pierced ; which did fast, pray, teach, heal, weep, sweat, bleed, and die ; that love will eternally embrace thee. When perfect created love, and most perfect uncreated love meet together, oh the blessed meeting ! It will not be like Joseph and his brethren, who lay upon one another's necks weeping ; it will break forth into a pure joy. . . . Christ's love to thee will not be as thine was on earth to Him, seldom and cold, up and down, with a good day and a bad. . . .

Infinite love must needs be a mystery to a finite capacity. No wonder if the angels desire to pry into this mystery. And if it be the study of the saints here to know the height, and breadth, and length, and depth of this love, though it passeth knowledge, this is the saint's rest in the fruition of God by love.\*

4. But even the full fruition of love would be incomplete without the final and crowning glory of Heaven, that overmastering joy which is the source of all its blessedness, the moral cause of the growth in goodness and likeness to God of which we have spoken, the beatific vision of God Himself.

'The vision of the face of God appears as the hope of the righteous in the Psalms (Ps. xi. 7; xvii. 15), while it is recognised as unattainable and unbearable by man in the present earthly life (Exod. xxxiii. 18, ff.). In the new Jerusalem it finds accomplishment (Rev. xxii. 4): "His servants shall do Him service, and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads." As He is Light, they shall be made light, and when the sons of God are thus revealed the end of creation will be reached' (Rom. viii. 18, ff.).†

We do not see God here, for 'no man can

\* 'Saint's Rest,' pp. 41, 42.

† Westcott on 1 John iii. 2.

see God and live'; and just as the naked eye, if compelled to gaze on the noonday glory of the sun, would be blinded by the intolerable light, so would the unveiled glory of God consume us as with a devouring fire if we looked on Him here. Even the dim and distant revelations which God sometimes gives to His saints on earth are often too much for them to bear. We read of one who had been long engaged in communion with God being so overpowered with the exceeding brightness of the revelation of the love of God that poured into his soul, and with augmenting intensity of effulgence as he prayed, that at length he recoiled from the intolerable joy almost as if from a pain, and besought God to withhold from him any farther manifestations of His glory, crying aloud, 'Shall Thy servant see Thee and live?'

But in Heaven 'we shall see Him as He is.' It is related that some native Christians who had been won from heathenism by the Gospel of Christ were being employed by a missionary to write down word by word the translation he was making of the New Testament into their own language, and that when they came to this verse in the First Epistle of St. John, they laid down their pens and said, 'No, we



cannot write this; it is too much. Let us write, *We shall kiss His feet.* But it is not too much, not too much for the Lord God to give, not too much for the glorified spirit to bear. The spiritual body shall be capable of enduring an effulgence of glory impossible for this mortal body to bear, for it will be 'raised in power' and 'in glory'; the redeemed soul shall be lifted to such heights of intellectual elevation that it shall be able to think of God as He is, and the redeemed spirit, one in goodness, one in will, one in love with God Himself, shall dare even to gaze on the awful and uncreated glory of God, before which angels and arch-angels veil their faces with their wings, shall see His infinite beauty and loveliness and majesty, and as it looks on Him as 'He is,' the vision shall transfigure and transform the worshipping and adoring heart, just as the burning glory of the sun smites on some heavy mass of cloud, drenching and saturating it with light, until every part begins to glow and burn with the radiance, and the darkness is transformed as into a sea of fire and of gold.

We shall 'see Him as He is.' Who can even faintly image what these words mean? To see Him on Whom no angel dares to gaze, the One Infinite and Everlasting Life, sole



Cause of all worlds, sole Fountain of all life,  
 Who alone knows Himself in the mystery of  
 His infinite life, Whose wisdom is everlasting,  
 Whose power is almighty, the Holy One in-  
 habiting the praises of eternity, Home of all  
 sweetness and tenderness and goodness, Him-  
 self perfect goodness, perfect holiness, perfect  
 love, to see Him in the eternal mystery of His  
 Being, One God and yet three in One, Father,  
 Son, and Holy Ghost, to see Him—this is  
 Heaven.

My readers may perhaps remember the words  
 in which Dante describes his approach to  
 Heaven in the vision granted him of the Most  
 High God there, and how even in his master  
 hands all human speech was powerless to tell  
 the surpassing wonder and glory of the vision :

‘Of radiance, clear and lofty, seemed methought,  
 Three orbs of triple hue ; clipt in one bound ;  
 And, from another, one reflected seemed,  
 As rainbow is from rainbow ; and the third  
 Seemed fire, breathed equally from both. O speech !  
 How feeble and how faint art thou to give  
 Conception birth. Yet this to what I saw  
 Is less than little. O Eternal Light !  
 Sole in Thyself Thou dwellest, and of Thyself  
 Sole understood—past, present, or to come.  
 \* \* \* \* \*

Here vigour failed the towering phantasy,  
 But yet the will rolled onward, like a wheel  
 In even motion, by the Love impelled  
 That moves the sun in Heaven, and all the stars.’

Words are all too feeble to declare the meaning of the words, 'We shall see Him even as He is.'

It is well to close the thought of such a revelation with the words, 'Everyone that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself even as He is pure.'

THE END.







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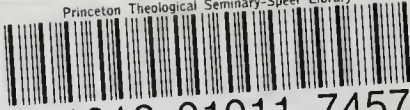
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